University of Alberta

Black Caribbean Canadian Culture Matters: Perspectives of Education "Back Home" and in Edmonton's Schools

by

Jean T. Walrond

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the difficulties some Caribbean heritage parents experience as they seek to educate their children in Edmonton's school system. The term Caribbean Canadian and Black Caribbean Canadian are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation. Five families of Caribbean heritage, consisting of two single-parents and three couple, participated in the research. All participants had children who were in the final 2 years of high school or had completed high school within the last 5 years. The interview process included conversations with the individuals and couples and a focus group session. These conversations lasted approximately 1 hour while the group discussion ran for about 90 minutes. The researcher's points of view and self-reflections on the thesis question were also considered as she met the criteria established for the research. The material was categorized and coded using the software package Nvivo®. Following this, critical discourse analysis was used to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the data.

Ogbu's (1992b) differential treatment of United States of America's minorities as belonging to either a voluntary or involuntary minority group was central to the dissertation's analysis. He listed four elements under the rubric of community forces to relate school adjustment and academic performance to the culture and language frame of reference of voluntary and involuntary minority groups. The dialogues strongly support the research literature that people of Caribbean heritage place a high emphasis on education and our knowledge is developed from formal and informal education sources. Critical cultural pedagogy is an important basis for acquiring and constructing knowledge. Additional findings support the literature that Edmonton's schools need to be

more inclusive in terms of curricula, pedagogy, and practice if they wish to assist in helping Caribbean Canadian youths to self-actualize as national and global citizens. The data points to the need for more capacity building within Edmonton's Caribbean community so their needs can be advanced as stakeholders in their children's educative goals.

DEDICATION

To the Walrond Family

Our Mission: To utilize our skills and talents to promote family unity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I offer prayers to God, the Almighty for his guidance and inspiration. To my parents, Horace Eton and Cosille Walrond (both deceased), I give thanks since they inspired me to cherish knowledge. To my daughters, Abiona Nicole Patterson Roberts and Michelle Ayodele Odette Walrond Patterson Nipp and their respective husbands, Daniel Roberts and Kevin Nipp, I thank them for their encouragement along this journey. I thank my siblings Esmond Bunny, Shirley, Horace Billy, and Keith Michael for their prayers, encouragement, and at times, brotherly and sisterly advice.

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CHAPTER ONE: INSTRUMENTS OF REPRESSION

Introduction

I experienced an epiphany in 1988. Going to Barbados allowed me to journey back in time to a place to understand representation and its politics. In this chapter I seek to let you, the reader, understand this realization and how it has allowed me to come to terms with the importance of representation in any socio-cultural structure. The journey through time, in the Barbados Museum, equipped me with new lenses to view the educational journey I was taking with my children as they attended public schools in Canada.

As I proceeded with my work, I found that it developed its own trajectory, taking me to unexpected places and this explains the layered approach to this dissertation. It is layered in terms of content, format, and presentation. First, the content lays out the cultural landscape of education in Edmonton and the Caribbean from a systems and personal perspective. Second, the layered format looks at formal education and unpacks that discourse to reveal the non-formal strands of education that constitute Caribbean knowledge. Third, the presentation, as a layering of the poetic dialect speech on the prose, allows the voice of the research participant to emerge through my writings. This presentation style ensures that the dissertation appeals to a variety of readers who can now read the education perspectives of six of Edmonton's Caribbean heritage families.

Throughout this dissertation there is repeated reference to the Black subject. The term Black has been racialized as pertaining to phenotypical characteristics (Wright, 2000). More recently, however, it is used to refer to a particular group of "people with family origins in the Caribbean and/or Africa" (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 3).

My educational journey with my children was challenging in Edmonton, Alberta. I was quite aware of what was occurring in my children's education, but I had no answers and a 1982 journal entry attests to the frustration I was encountering with my daughter's (Michelle) education, long before I ever considered embarking on this scholarship (See Appendix 1 for 1982 journal entry).

I will attempt to provide clarity for my assumptions by reviewing the theoretical assumptions of educational theorists from both dominant and marginalized perspectives. I note that my parents valued education, and that the Caribbean community in Edmonton has worked in the margins to provide our children with formal and informal educational opportunities. In addition, I note that while some of the after-school education programs in Toronto's Black community were successful, many were discontinued due to cuts in government spending. Interested researchers in Toronto have conducted numerous studies about Black parental involvement in the politics of education and policy debates. I could not locate any similar research about Edmonton's Black or Caribbean community. This gap inspired me to start my research with parents in Edmonton's Caribbean community. This dissertation sought input and interpretations from parents of Caribbean heritage about what their educational experiences were like in the Caribbean and how these compare to their contemporary experiences with their own children's education in Edmonton.

The dissertation is divided into eight chapters. In Chapter One I introduce the subject of my dissertation research. There is a discussion about the inspiration for the dissertation. The second chapter deals with the literature review. There I discuss cultural identity as it pertains to many people of Caribbean heritage. Many of these people have lived in the immediate shadow of the dominant culture and society and have had no indigenous language as a respite from this disenfranchisement. Chapter Two also develops the other themes that will ground the research. The third chapter examines the dissertation's theoretical framework. Parents I interviewed support researchers' claims that Blacks in the Caribbean valued education (Beckford, 1976; Miller, 1976, 1997). My reflections about my family's approach to education are explained in this chapter. Next, I demonstrate that first generation parents inherently support the literature which states that community-teacher relationships in the Caribbean play an important role in helping children to self-actualize (Reid, 1976; Seaga, 1976). In addition I say that because of our cultural identity, people in the Caribbean have an appreciation for both formal and informal education, and we develop our world view at the confluence of these two streams of knowledge. My contention here is that educators in Edmonton's public schools need to be more aware of the knowledge that parents of Caribbean heritage bring to the educational landscape. Lack of recognition is one of the challenges these parents face, but parental knowledge is essential if educators are to develop Caribbean Canadian children who will self-actualize.

Self-actualization, for people of Caribbean heritage and indeed all who occupy the margins in the eyes of the dominant society, encompasses more than Maslow's (1987) conceptualization of the term. Maslow "argues that all human needs can be arranged in a hierarchy, beginning with physical needs—for air, food, and water. [These are followed by the] four levels of psychological needs—for safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization" (p. xii). In the context of how we see ourselves, as Canadians of Caribbean heritage, we must define self-actualization specifically to include our subjective positionality as it is juxtaposed against the *dominant group* and the dominant group's structures. This means that not only should we think in terms of striving to get a good job so we can meet the needs as presented in Maslow's paradigm, but we must recognize and address the realities of the way others see us, and how this contributes to our denial of the right to achieve self-actualization. This analysis foregrounds the politics of recognition and the role the education structure plays in its apparent complicity in thwarting Caribbean Canadian heritage students' attempts to self-actualize.

The politics of recognition is inextricably linked to self-actualization, and indeed has the potential to scuttle one's efforts for development towards self-actualization. How you are recognized in a society determines how you achieve self-actualization on a human scale and this precludes Maslow's paradigm. One's self-actualization on a human scale also addresses how you are seen and perceived when you are least able to articulate to others who you are. For example, on Saturday April 22, 2006 my daughter, Michelle, was involved as a pedestrian in a traffic accident. Although she was in a fight for her life, she was sent off to the hospital by the Edmonton police as a Jane Doe, while her purse with all her identification lay on the street in plain view. As she is a sickle cell anaemia patient, who frequently attends the University of Alberta hospital, she was immediately identified by their emergency department's staff and received their protocol for sickle cell anaemia patients. I credit the staff's recognition of my daughter, at a time when she was unable to identify herself, with her continued possibility for life and development. Kallen (2003) observes: "The major trust of international human rights instruments has been to endorse the principle of the global unity of humankind and to afford protection for the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals" (p. 21).

In the fourth chapter I present my participants' dialogues as evidence of their understanding of education. Particular dialogues that illustrate the parents' challenges with attaining the educational needs of their children in Edmonton's school system were also articulated in this chapter. The fifth and sixth chapters explore the ideas raised in the preceding chapter with cultural discourse analysis of the found poetry that emerged from the participants' dialogues and conversations. The analysis is carried out with limited restructuring of the participants' own words. This is to emphasise the participants' voices and to demonstrate how cultural knowledge was exemplified through cultural discourse. Chapter Seven provides an overview of the significant findings, organizes these into themes, considers the relationship of these findings to the existing research, and looks at the implications that this research has for current theories on culture and education. In Chapter Eight, I suggested that three areas need to be addressed. First, educators need to be aware of the particular ideas that parents of Caribbean heritage can contribute to education. Second, parents need to be more involved in the education landscape, especially with respect to the policies and politics of education. Third, there is a serious need for community capacity building in Edmonton's Caribbean community.

Inspiration for My Dissertation: My Emerging Narrative

In 1988, the maternal side of my family held a reunion in Trinidad to celebrate the passing of our grandmother who died in April. In August of the same year, my brothers, my sister, and I, along with our children, travelled from New Jersey, New York, Canada, and Barbados for this celebration. During our stay in Trinidad we decided to go to Barbados where our sister resides, as it is the ancestral home of my father. While on the island, we visited the Barbados Museum which my sister described as the best place she had seen Caribbean plantation life historically documented.

Established in 1933, the Barbados Museum collects, preserves, and publishes "matters relating to the history and antiquities of Barbados" with a mandate of promoting the history and culture of the island (The Barbados Museum and Historical Society, n. d.). The museum is housed in a former British army garrison that was built between 1790 and 1853. The area of the museum that aroused my interest was the plantation house and its period rooms. One room was decorated with a secretary bookcase[1], chair, table, and book-keeper's ledger. My eyes travelled through the glassed window to rest on the table with the opened ledger. Amazed, and with wonderment, I noticed that the ledger's hand-printed pages listed the plantation's holdings or assets. Among the assets were horses, other animals, farming implements, tools, and enslaved Africans. I peered at the pages hoping or longing to notice a name, African or otherwise, which would identify these enslaved Africans. But sadly, this was not to be found. When I entered the map room next door, I observed many interesting maps but focused on an 18th century map of Barbados[2] with many names inscribed on it. I realized the names were those of the plantation families who inhabited the island at that time. I decided to see if my family name was on the map and sure enough I saw the name "Walrond"[3] in 6-point font on this map. I called my family over to see what I had discovered, and as I stared at the map continued to see even more Walronds.

What was even more interesting was that there was either a bundle of sugar-cane or a windmill next to the name. These insignia denoted the occupation of the landowner. Make no mistake though. I knew then what I had discovered were names of those who had enslaved my ancestors. This profound realization of the chasm that existed between those two adjacent rooms struck me emphatically: I could trace my paternal lineage back to Barbados but not beyond.

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[1] Also known as a cabinet-sécretaire, this piece of furniture is "a desk with a cabinet above" (Whiton, 1974, p. 185).

[2] The 1710 Map of Barbados was published by George Willdey (*fl.* c. 1695–1733) and sold at his business *The Great Toy Shop* next to the *Dogg Tavern*, the corner of Ludgate Street near St. Paul's (http://www.antiquemaps.co.uk/chapter15.html).

[3] The Walrond and Duke families figured prominently in the colonization of Barbados. Humphrey and Edward Walrond immigrated to Barbados sometime after 1645. Col. Humphrey, described as "exceptionally prominent and disruptive, in the early political affairs of Barbados during the civil war" ("The Duke Family in Barbados," March 22, 2004), was president of Barbados from 1660 to 1663.

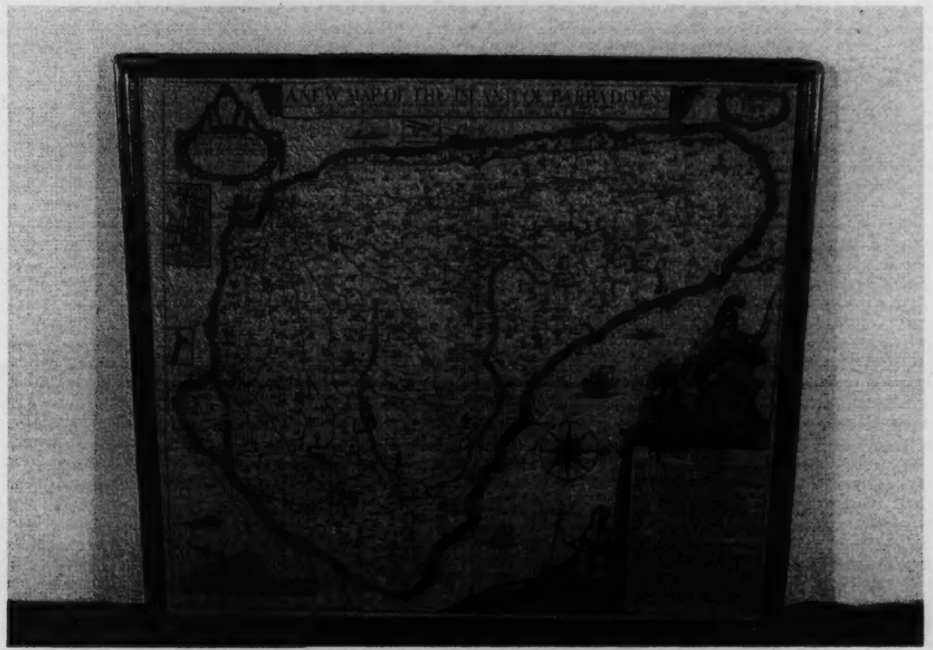

Figure 1: 1710 Map of Barbados

The preceding narrative details a pivotal, personal encounter with rupture. Brand (2001), who writes of a similar experience, describes it in terms of "a rupture in the quality of being" (p. 5). In both senses rupture is a contextual dislocation created as a result of a group of people being torn away from one place and deposited into another space to recreate place. Here, the experience connotes the loss of voice, heritage, language, place, geography, history, identity, ethnicity, culture, representation, humanness, etc., all of which are essential in defining a human being.

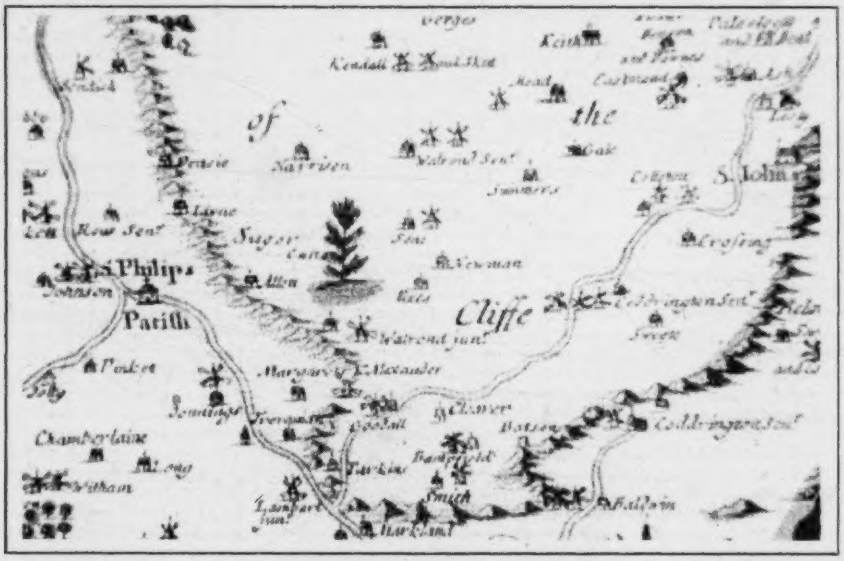
Kendall
Keith
of
the
Walrond Sen.r
Summers
S. John
Row Sen.r
Sugar Cane
S. Philips
Johnson
Parish
Allen
Newman
Cliffe
Codrington Sen.r
Crosing
Walrond jun.r
Alexander
Chamberlaine
Witham
Long
Clinner
Batson
Codrington
Smith
Baldwin

Figure 2: A section of the map of Barbados showing the name "Walrond"

This experience of rupture is common to the majority of Blacks in the Caribbean and the Western world as their history includes post-Columbian enslavement. The ensuing reality of this denial of humanness has caused me to constantly investigate if and how I am represented or recognized in established structures and to analyze lack of recognition and representation critically.

I have given much thought to the hurt that accompanies the phenomenon of rupture, and I understand that the accompanying hurtful feelings continue long after the event. Juxtaposing the accounting ledger with the map of Barbados I also see the relationships between power, identity, representation, culture, commodification, and objectification. In addition, this awareness figured in how I viewed my children's education, especially in terms of how they were represented in the education system. Moreover, lack of representation encouraged me to document our community's cultural history, encouraged me to be involved with my community, and subsequently spurred my desire to conduct this present research.

My Curiosity

As a child growing up in the Caribbean, my personal experience with education was that my parents placed very high importance on formal and informal education. Even though it was clear that my eldest brother received more of my dad's attention, it was always expected that I should also take my education seriously. I was expected not only to obtain my Cambridge "O" and "A" Level certificates, but I was also to attend university, preferably abroad, and complete my university degree. I not only achieved most of these goals, but after acquiring my Bachelor of Science degree at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, I did not return to the Caribbean. Instead, like many other students from the Caribbean, I chose to stay in Canada to provide my children with more opportunities for their self-actualization. Relocating to Canada did not change the educational mores with which I was imprinted, and I tried to pass these on to my children as well. In spite of my ambitions, my educational experiences with my children were more challenging at the nexus of school and home, than I ever remember it being part of my parents' experiences. Thus, my intention for this research was to investigate if other parents of Caribbean heritage, living in Edmonton, shared aspirations and experiences that were similar to mine. During this research process I hoped to unfold the layers of educational discourses within the context of the Caribbean experience, cultural identity, and development.

My doctoral research was conducted in Edmonton's Caribbean Canadian community. This research sought to ascertain the experiences of families when they educated their children in Alberta's schools. My research elucidated the informal cultural pedagogical practices in which the Caribbean community engages, and investigated the present formal pedagogical practices in Alberta's K–12 curricula in relation to Caribbean-Canadian familial and community needs. I conversed with families in Edmonton's Caribbean community to understand their educational concerns. Parental knowledge and experience were established as being crucial to any discussions that pertained to their children's scholastic development. Like me, many of the parents I conversed with had more that 10 years' experience with the school system. My research was based on the experiences of these families whose children have attended or are still attending public, separate, and charter schools in Alberta's school system.

Their views provided a comparative assessment of education, articulating the way they saw Caribbean and Canadian educational issues in the larger social, cultural, economic, and class contexts. Caribbean Canadian parents based their understanding of education on their own education whether this was completed in the Caribbean, England, or Canada. This included the informal and non-formal community and familial teachings they received to help them maintain their Caribbean culture. Informal education is refers to "all learning activities that occur outside of formally organized educational sites", and non-formal education "refers to courses, educational activities, and training . . . organized through clubs" ((Wotherspoon, 2004, p. 74). The cultural studies focus allowed me, as a researcher, to examine the educational philosophy of Caribbean Canadian families from that perspective. To make meaning of this education philosophy, I verified the importance that Caribbean heritage individuals placed on formal education and examined how they demonstrated their valuing of it.

At the heart of this research is the need to derive a better understanding of the educational understandings of some parents of Caribbean heritage. To gather this information, I asked the following questions:

- What are Caribbean heritage parents' experiences with education, both in the Caribbean and Edmonton?
- To what extent did the Edmonton public school system effectively provide Caribbean heritage children with a holistic education that included a cultural focus?
- What systemic changes are needed in Alberta's education system?
- How might teachers, as mediators of Alberta's education system, alter their perception so that they can incorporate these desired changes with ease?
- What would parents like their children and teachers to know about their valuing of education as it pertains to self-actualization?
- What do parents want the teachers to know and understand about their (the parents') experiences of education and culture?

The Perspectives of My Research

Educational and cultural theoretical assumptions were perspectives that framed the analysis of my research. When read as an educational research project, the research helps advance the need for inclusive educational pedagogies and practices, critical discourses focused on ethics and justice, and social change advocacy as an anti-racism educational strategy (Dei, 1996a). Drawing on Baraketh and Cleghorn's (2000) studies, I define pedagogy as the application of "particular curriculum content, design, classroom strategies and techniques" (p. 71) as well as, evaluative purposes, and methods in the practice of teaching. In terms of anti-racism pedagogy, Dei and Calliste (2000) define anti-racism as a "counter-hegemonic strategy for dealing with oppression based on race, class, gender, and sexuality" (p. 12). In the context of schooling, they define anti-racism pedagogy as "an action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression" (2000, p. 25). Also within this context, critical discourse can be thought of as a way of interrogating or analysing text in order to get at a less apparent meaning.

As a cultural research project, the research investigates how race, culture, language, and power intersect to influence the type of education that students of Caribbean Canadian heritage receive. In an effort to develop consensus with regard to these topics, it analyzes the current research, both supportive and unsympathetic, and solicits input from the community to answer the questions raised and to create awareness of the educational issues.

Justification for Research

As an Educational Research Project.

Like the majority of Canadian parents, Caribbean Canadian parents are very concerned about the type of education their children receive. While the majority of Canadians are concerned about the level of funding education receives and the cost-benefit ratio of education, there are additional concerns. First, today, those who educate are challenged to adapt their curriculum and pedagogical practices to meet the educational needs of a diverse student body (James, 2003a; McLaren, 2003a; Thomas, 2000). Second, some theorists and many parents are concerned that the present education system, in an effort to fulfill a capitalist agenda, streams or attempts to stream many children into low-paying or low-status jobs (Carby, 1999; Giroux, 2003; James, 2001; McLaren, 2003a). Third, there are concerns that the classroom is not a welcoming, and accommodating environment where children of Caribbean heritage and other marginalized groups can discuss their life experiences (Foster, 1996; McLaren, 2003a; Walrond-Patterson, 1999; Walrond-Patterson, Crown, & Langford, 1998). Fourth, the community and parents are concerned that schools with their hidden curricula, function to make their children unwitting and unwilling accomplices and participants in a form of social reproduction that undermines their children's opportunities for self-actualization (Bannerji, 2000; Brathwaite, 1996; James, 2001). Foster writes: "[t]ypically, in the Toronto area, 60% of black students do not graduate from high school" (p. 131). This is very disturbing because as Foster continues:

> Talk to most people and they will tell you that the gap between the black experience and the wider Canadian society is widening. This does not augur well for either side: not for the black youths who are likely to find themselves marginalized and as frustrated as their parents; not for the wider community, which must always be wondering what price must be paid for social peace. (p. 137)

These challenges exist within a climate driven by what Paul Martin, the former Prime Minister of Canada, called the "politics of achievement" in a speech at the Liberal convention on November 14, 2003. Martin indicated that Canada has a role to play in influencing a changing world because of its policies, social foundation, and education system. According to Kachur (1999a), Premier Ralph Klein, of Alberta, expressed a similar neo-liberal sentiment valuing a highly educated workforce.

> Well-educated and highly trained people are the key to achieving our goals. We need results-based education that prepares students to meet emerging technologies and to deal with change more rapid than at any other time in the past. (Kachur, 1999a, pp. 60–61)

In a counter-analysis, I share concerns about low levels of educational achievement of Black students in Canadian schools with several other educational theorists and researchers. In this respect, we question the part exclusion plays in this problem (Codjoe, 1997, 2001; Dei, 1996a; Henry, 1994; James, 2003a; Kallen, 2003; Ogbu, 1992a; Walrond-Patterson, 1999; Walrond-Patterson, Crown, & Langford, 1998). Even more importantly, there continues to be a concern that the multidisciplinary views of many Black theorists, including James & Brathwaite (1996), Solomon (1992), and Walcott (1996), are perhaps read by scholars, but rarely cited or included in the dominant social or education discourses (Codjoe, 1997; Gilroy, 1991). By failing to include these theorists' views in the wider educational discourse, educational policy analysts exclude crucial information that should contribute to educational policy debates. Moreover, when the works of Black writers or those of other non-mainstream groups are not readily visible because of strategic and systemic silencing, it not only "masks their . . . hidden history" (Gilroy, 1991, p. 12), but more importantly, it also connotes that the work of non-mainstream people may not be valued as a way to enhance history, heritage, and lived experiences in formal education.

Learning from Our Children's Educative Landscape.

At a personal level, my educational experiences with my children alerted me to the fact that not many resources were in place to deal with Caribbean heritage families and their children. In most cases, teachers displayed very little knowledge of the areas of the world from which we emigrated. They had very little idea about our habits or customs. On many occasions I was asked to either send some of my country's food to the class or to come in my ethnic clothes to let the children know more about my family and me. Some years later, my older daughter, Abiona, who is now a teacher in Edmonton's school system, came to me asking for more information about Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana because the students in her Advance Placement Teaching (APT) class wanted to know more about her origins and background. On the one hand, I admired the curiosity of the children. However, on the other hand, I felt if Abiona had been given an opportunity to explore her identity and to reinforce family knowledge while she was at school, or even when she did her degree in Education, she would have been better prepared to answer their questions. For me, it reinforced my argument that no place was made in the school curriculum for her to explore her identity and to share this with her classmates in an all-empowering way. Other theorists and students express these sentiments saying that the worldviews of non-mainstream students are not validated in the classroom (Codjoe, 1997; Codjoe, 2001; Dei, 1996a; K. James, 1996; Kallen, 2003; Walrond-Patterson, 1999; Walrond-Patterson, Crown, & Langford, 1998). Thus, even as I write this dissertation today, issues of inclusion of Black students and other non-mainstream worldviews in the education system are still pertinent.

I have reflected on the educational experiences of my children but, as Clandinin and Connelly (1995) and Greene (1978) point out, there is a larger story. School narratives are often dominated by the storied lives of schoolboard officials, administrators, teachers, and students. I will now unpack some of the teaching pedagogy and practice literature to provide the collective education story that was part of my daughters' school experiences. An understanding of their views is important because, as Greene writes, "once pedagogy becomes crucial, the splits and deformations in those who teach or treat or administer or organize take on a political significance never confronted in time past" (p. 96). Clandinin and Connelly's work (1995) uses the stories of teachers to unpack "the professional knowledge landscape" (p. 4); that is, to investigate "the interface of theory and practice in teachers' lives" (p. 4). They write that the knowledge landscape of teachers includes in its setting professional knowledge that is influenced through experiential encounters with a variety of factors. These experiences are with people, places, and things behind the classroom door and in other professional, communal spaces. These encounters produce meaning that is both intellectual and moral in scope. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) also assert that their research shows that teachers demonstrated anxiety because of the experiences they encountered within that knowledge landscape. The conflicting messages they receive about professional knowledge contribute to their anxiety as these messages do not align to produce personal practical knowledge. Notes on a musical scale can either come together to produce harmony or discord, as in the case of noise. It is as though two types of rhythm (dis)function together to produce noise. The question I ask is why is there this misalignment of knowledge? I also ask: How does this conscious or unconscious discord manifest itself in the classroom when difference and diversity are encountered and where personal practical knowledge confronts praxis? Many researchers are still trying to answer this philosophical question. Meanwhile, students, such as my children, must deal with the fallout from the epistemological dilemmas associated with the confrontation that occurs when educators try to balance their experiences in different spaces along the knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

All the teachers who taught my children were White; hence during their school life they never experienced what it was like to have someone similar to their parents in such a leadership role in the classroom. It may be easy to conclude that perhaps a shortage of Black teachers contributed to this situation. However, while my children and others of Caribbean heritage were most likely to be schooled in urban settings such as Edmonton, the majority of teachers of Caribbean heritage who were fortunate to find employment in the education field, were employed in rural school districts or school districts that were in areas outlying urban settings. Some of these teachers chose to maintain families in urban settings and hence sent their children to schools that were closer to their homes. The major impacts of this strategy were that these teachers were not in a position to mentor or to be positive role models to Caribbean heritage children. As well, because they rarely had time to immerse themselves in the urban Caribbean community, they were external to this community, were seldom seen as part of the community, and seldom contributed to community capacity building. Youths, such as my children, were robbed of important socialization and motivational opportunities for acquiring a sense of identity as prospective teachers. While they were in the classroom, my children had to make a conscious effort to look beyond race, ethnicity, and other social constructs of the dominant society to visualize their potential as Canadians of Caribbean heritage. This was never my experience as I saw Black teachers throughout my schooling and could dream of one day growing up and becoming a teacher. Schissel and Wotherspoon (2003) say that the literature is inconclusive as to whether the achievement gap decreases if students are taught by teachers of similar heritage. But they add that "the presence of teachers who share a common heritage with the students they teach fosters a sense of acceptance and may facilitate stronger communication among education system personnel, students, and parents" (pp. 116–117).

From the standpoint and context of my dissertation, theoretical assumptions such as "significance of teacher race" (Sleeter, 2004, p. 161), "dysconscious racism" (King, 2004, p. 72), "social dominance theory" (Howard, 2006, p. 35), "malefic generosity" (Greene, 1978. p. 97), "false generosity" (Freire, 1970/2005a, p. 45), and "critical race theory" (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 53) are some theoretical assumptions used to describe the teacher-student praxis of my children's school experiences.

Malefic generosity is intentional or unintentional kindness that does not alleviate the misery or oppression of the intended recipient. In fact it serves to perpetuate the misery or oppression and provides the oppressor with the option to continually feed off the misery of the oppressed. Freire (1970/2005a) provides context and understanding of this phrase in the following:

> The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both. Any attempt to 'soften' the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this. In order to have continued opportunity to express their 'generosity,' the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this 'generosity,' which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty. That is why the dispensers of false generosity become desperate at the slightest threat to its source. (p. 44)

Sleeter (2004), who self identifies as a White teacher educator, conducted research with White teachers to determine the inherent ill effects of the education system. She was able to conclude that these effects are associatively linked to those in society. She positions the White discourse of non-White students' educative potentials squarely on a hegemonic society. McLaren's (2003b) definition of hegemony is useful here because he understands society as being class, race, and gender constructed. He states:

> Hegemony refers to the maintenance of domination not by the sheer exercise of force but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system, and the family. . . . Hegemony refers to the moral and intellectual leadership of a dominant class over a subordinate class achieved not through coercion (i. e., threat of imprisonment or torture) or the wilful construction of rules and regulations (as in a dictatorship or fascist regime), but rather through the general winning of consent of the subordinate class to the authority of the dominant class. The dominant class need not impose force for the manufacture of hegemony since the subordinate class actively subscribes to many of the values and objectives of the dominant class without being aware of the source of those values or the interests which inform them (pp. 76–77)

Sleeter (2004) says White teachers cannot be expected to be non-racist because they are products of and beneficiaries of a society that is inherently and structurally racist. She contends, "A structural analysis of racism suggests that education will not produce less racist institutions as long as white people control it" (p. 164). White society has no desire to disrupt the educational status quo because empowering the masses to have access to high status education places them in the competitive pool for the limited high status jobs, a situation which definitely disadvantages the dominant society. Sleeter argues that “it is important to educate white people as well as people of color about racism, but not with the assumption that white people on their own will then reconstruct racist institutions” (p. 165). There is also the tendency to target a nebulous external inertia for societal inequality and “to explain persistent racial inequality in a way that does not implicate white society” (Sleeter, p. 167). As well, a “cultural-deficiency perspective” (Sleeter, p. 166) is adopted where parental attitudes toward schooling, lack of language skills, and gang influences contribute to a power remissive discourse used to frame the school failure of children of Caribbean and others of non-White heritage.

King (2004), another teacher educator, stories the White student teacher experience with the visible minority student through their “dysconscious racism” (p. 72) lenses. She defines dysconsciousness as “an uncritical habit of mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given” (p. 73). She conceptualizes dysconscious racism as “limited and distorted understandings about inequality and cultural diversity,” which underscores the salience of and hence makes philosophically problematic any praxis towards “truly equitable education” (p. 72). King analyzed her students’ essays to discern that while the intent of her course was from a “social reconstructivist tradition of critical, transformative, liberatory education” (p. 72), her students’ reflective essays portrayed “internalized ideologies that both justify the racial status quo and devalue cultural diversity” (p. 72).

During the course of conducting multicultural seminars for White teachers, Howard (2006), a self-identified White educator, was able to list several assumptions that White teachers make about their students and themselves in the education landscape. First, he says:

> As a White educator, I find it difficult to approach the topic of White dominance. I know that many of my White colleagues are tired of hearing about it. The litany of past sins committed by Whites against people of other races and cultures echoes in our ears, and we resist yet another recitation of this old and damning chant. We are tempted to cry out, "Enough! I know this story and I don't need to hear it again." Even those of us who are actively engaged in the work of social justice, and committed to more equitable educational outcomes for all of our students, still tire of being seen as the demons of history and the omnipresent oppressors of those who are not White. (p. 30)

Howard also admitted to "cultural encapsulation" (p. 14), defined from his hegemonic perspective of Whiteness as "the centrepiece of a constant and undifferentiated milieu, unnoticed in its normalcy" (p. 14). As he perceived it, this cultural encapsulation contributed to his narcissistic and xenophobic identity when he came face to face with Blackness/Otherness. Other concepts he identified are "social positionality . . ., [which he linked to] European hegemony and social dominance in educational settings" (p. 34).

Greene (1978) draws attention to those teachers who "have no real faith in the capacities of the students . . . with whom they work, but . . . are nonetheless committed to transforming an unjust social order in their behalf" (p. 96). She claims their actions usually amount to malefic generosity. Similarly, Freire (1993/2005b) believes that those teachers who are culpable in perpetuating the existing power structures, are incapable of liberating marginalized students even if they reach out to help them. In Freirean terms, their praxis amounts to false generosity as said teachers set aside historic prejudices associated with Whiteness or dominance. Their very vocation is based on the rhetorical inability of the oppressed or marginalised individual or community to achieve self-actualization (Freire, 1993/2005b).

In teasing out strands of Whiteness, Ladson-Billings (2004) claims that Critical Race Theory (CRT) seeks to understand how the dialectic of Whiteness and the concomitant subordination of people of colour work to maintain racial power. For Ladson-Billings, CRT is important because of the growing interests in "teachers' narrative classroom knowledge" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 14). Since storytelling now has legitimate precedent in the educational landscape, "the use of voice or 'naming your reality' is a way that CRT links form and substance in scholarship" (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 55).

In my experience, many educators failed to provide positive classroom environments for my children and many others of Caribbean heritage. Diverse tensions existed and the preceding theories now help me to develop a more reasoned understanding of the situations that have perplexed me. Based on my experience of Alberta's education system, my doctoral research is a quest to articulate "forms of pedagogy and counterknowledge that challenge . . . [educators'] internalized ideologies and subjective identities" (King, 2004, p. 72) based on racism.

Growing up in the Caribbean, I heard many stories that reinforced the respect that my parents and grandparents had for formal education. My father, Horace Eton, told us his mother saved whatever she could have afforded in order to give him private Latin lessons to enable him to study for a degree in pharmacy. My mother, Mothsie, spoke of the extramural studies which my father took in addition to apprenticing to become a pharmacist. He passed the exams which were set by a university in England and my mother believed that her perpetual novenas during the course of his studies were also instrumental in his success. Family stories were not the only reminders of the importance education. Reminders also came in the Calypsos we heard and from some of our renowned literary writers. For example, the importance of education was spelled by C. L. R. James (1963/2002) who devoted a substantial section of his book *Beyond a Boundary* to the role his parents played in his early education. He also wrote that people from the island of Trinidad celebrated whenever our students, described as being from the colonies, eclipsed English students in the Cambridge exams.

Some Canadian researchers have written about the need for Caribbean community and family involvement in the education of their children. Brathwaite (1996) reviewed the educational experiences of Black parents in Ontario, and Dei (1996b) conducted research on Black school dropouts. James and Brathwaite (1996) reviewed Ontario's multicultural education initiatives and each concluded that racial minority students continue to perform poorly in schools. One of Dei's (1996b) preliminary findings shows that students who dropout from Ontario's schools did so because of the perception of differential treatment that was race-based. Other findings highlighted inadequate curricular content and uniform communicative and pedagogical practices devoid of their experiences and knowledge. Howard (2006) makes two interesting theoretical statements in relation to curriculum, pedagogical practice, and what is valued. He writes:

> (1) Schooling, like all other social institutions, continues to function as a system of privilege and preference, reinforced by power, favoring certain groups over others.
>
> (2) The race-based achievement gap in public education today is the demographic embodiment of our history of White social, political, and economic dominance (p. 118).

A third research finding about the students' understanding of schooling focused on the "identification-participation" model (Dei, 1996b p. 38). This model suggests that students who felt that their schools identified them as contributing members of the school society were more likely to participate in school activities than those who felt left out or unrecognized in their school society (Dei, 1996b).

The factors associated with those who drop out are also part of the experiences of those who choose to stay in school. Personally, these factors were also part of the schooling experiences of my children and me. And, as Howard (2006) reinforces, "[E]ven for those children of color who are successful, school is often experienced as a foreign environment" (p. 120). But, we stayed in the public school system in spite of these challenges. Is it because our resilience to educational stress is higher? If so, why do we frame compulsory education on a monolithic system that requires different tolerance levels, especially in relation to such social constructs as race, ethnicity, class, and gender?

Further, their analysis identified a lack of parental and community involvement in children's education and the need for this involvement in formal education (Brathwaite, 1996; Calliste, 1996; Dei, 1996b; Howard, 2006; James, 1996)

It is imperative that we, as parents of children of Caribbean heritage, now participate in our children's learning because of the tendency of the school system to see our children as having an American experience and American worldview (Brathwaite, 1996; Codjoe, 1997; James & Brathwaite, 1996). Sewell (2004), conducting research in Britain among boys of Caribbean heritage, demonstrated that Black males are likely to be deemed academic underachievers and streamed into non-standard and dead-end or so-called low-status programs. This study was repeated in both Canada and the United States with similar conclusions (Codjoe, 1997; Ogbu, 1978).

Research conducted in the Ontario school system by Dei (1996b), obtained the views of Black parents towards schooling. However, I have no knowledge that such research was conducted with Caribbean parents in Alberta's school system. Brathwaite's (1996) personal experience and the research she conducted among ethnically diverse Black parents shows that although the majority of parents and the community contribute to and support schooling, this is never recognized at school. For example, she writes about a report "On Any Given Saturday" which affirms the community tutoring programs that exist outside the school system. As is the case in Edmonton, these establishments focus on English language upgrading, homework help, self-esteem building, and extras such as Black history and indigenous knowledge education. While these programs benefit some parents, they cannot meet the needs of the communities' demands. In Toronto, many Black groups politically advocate for the educational needs of their communities. However, the evidence suggests that their work has not been as successful as they would have envisioned at the onset of their activities. The African Heritage Educators' Network (North York) Saturday Classes, although very successful, eventually ceased because of provincial funding cuts, greater Toronto city amalgamation, and new school board charges for the use of the school where the program was held (K. S. Brathwaite, personal communication, September 28, 2006).

With respect to Edmonton and Alberta, these types of political activities do not yet exist, and formal community organizations are yet to address the educational concerns of families in the community seriously. Nevertheless, the Caribbean community has provided many opportunities to educate our children and to celebrate our children's academic and non-academic achievements. For example, the Western Carnival Development Association (WCDA) with its production of the Cariwest Festival has produced public cultural pedagogy since 1985 (Walrond-Patterson, 1999). Over the years, several other community organizations have contributed, and continue to contribute, to children's education in formal and informal ways. Some of these are the Edmonton Caribbean Cultural Association, the Jamaica Association of Northern Alberta, the Barbados Association of Alberta, the Congress of Black Women of Canada, the Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage, the Black Achievement Awards Society of Alberta, the Heritage Community Foundation, the Western Carnival Development Association, and the Canadian National Griots Awards (Codjoe, 1997; Walrond-Patterson, 1999). As Brathwaite (1996) believes, while the projects of these groups “serve as a life-line for many Black youth disengaged from school” (p. 126), research is needed to determine if parents support these initiatives and to determine whether these initiatives have any support among school boards, school administrations, and educators who are not of Caribbean heritage. This research will seek to answer this question. In addition, my literature search reveals that while other research has been conducted with Black students who have been through Alberta’s school system (Codjoe, 1997; Kelly, 1998, 2001; Walrond-Patterson, 1999), there has been no research done with Caribbean Canadian parents who have educated their children in Alberta.

Are Caribbean immigrant families to be “spectators . . . [as opposed to] actors” (Freire, 1993/2005b, p. 48) in their children’s education? If parents feel estranged from oppressed by the system, then they are even more obliged to participate (Brathwaite, 1996). Freire (1993/2005b) states, the required change to an oppressive system must come from the oppressed not the oppressor. This systemic change also requires, from all involved parties, a genuine willingness and commitment to praxis in order to foster inclusion, justice, and equality. Praxis is the pursuit of a fuller humanity through transforming action, i. e., a reiterative process of action, self-reflection, and action to create a higher ordered situation (Freire, 1993/2005b). Simply put, praxis implies doing a task, reflecting on the action, and using the knowledge gained through reflection to improve the former action.

In this introduction I have addressed how I got involved in my children’s education. I also recall that once I started to apply a more microscopic lens on this education, I noticed that the teacher embodies several identities which are played out in the teaching landscape. Teachers' perceptions of difference affect the relationships they have with students based on race, ethnicity, class, and other socially constructed concepts. Researchers show that their perceptions lead to marginalized students being victims of streaming and low expectations. The students who do the *education dance* get into university and graduate with professional degrees are also victims of systemic discrimination in the education system. Many never get permanent contracts and some find that their only employment opportunities exist in rural areas, where they will never contribute to community capacity building in the urban areas where Blacks are most likely to be residing. Research also shows that communities in Toronto have taken the initiative to organize community out-of-school programs that focus on helping African-Canadian students. However, these programs are always in crisis of closure due to lack of provincial funding and formal school support. Thus, my research will provide empowering opportunities for members of the Caribbean community in Edmonton to examine options they can use to improve the education of their children.

In framing my research as a cultural studies research project, I posit Edmonton's Caribbean community in general and the Western Carnival Development Association (WCDA)'s endeavours to promote Caribbean Carnival culture as an entrance of the discourse into "culturally relevant teaching" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 94) in Alberta's school system. However, our work with the festival and our experiences in the education arena exemplify how race, culture, and power intersect, as in a Venn diagram to establish whose culture is given status (Dei, 1996a; James, 2001) and whose values and worldviews are maintained (Giroux, 1997; Weiler, 1988). When applied, this culturally hegemonic educational system discourages many Caribbean heritage students, stifles some student's abilities, accounts for an increase in school dropouts (James & Brathwaite, 1996; James, 1996; McLaren, 2003; Weiler, 1988), and leads many to consider schools as "instruments of repression" (Giroux, 1997). The literature also points out that the present form of education is more concerned with satisfying the technocratic demands of the marketplace than with creating a balance between economic market demands and social justice issues (Dei, 1996a; Ghosh, 1996; Giroux, 1997; McLaren, 2003a).

With this preceding synopsis of Caribbean Canadians realities and a fair understanding of the education landscape, I will now proceed to present a theoretical understanding of the concepts that drove my research.

CHAPTER TWO: BUILDING AN UNDERSTANDING OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In Chapter One, I documented my inspiration for this research with a brief outline of my personal understandings of my children's educational experiences in schools in Edmonton, Alberta. I noted that people of Caribbean heritage have had a long-standing impression that education is important for social mobility and individual economic advancement, but they needed to be convinced that they could contribute to community development, and concomitantly, national development. The resulting resistance was perhaps attributable to the fact that a zero value was placed on their labour, the denial of rights to even their own bodies during enslavement, and the patriarchy and "malefic generosity," (Greene, 1978, p. 97) which continued during British colonial rule.

With this setting as the framework, I proceeded to construct the educational landscape in which people of Caribbean heritage are immersed when their children undertake formal education in Edmonton's schools. A review of the literature about teacher preparedness for a teaching landscape defined by its cultural diversity was conducted. This review led to the conclusion that teacher stress at accommodating difference was evident. This evidence came from research that was carried out by Clandinin and Connelly (1995), Sleeter (2004), King (2004), and Howard (2006). In addition, analysis of my autoethnography provided insights about the culture that exists in this landscape. I claim that success at school is, in many ways, dependent on school culture and an appropriate accommodation of the cultural identities of their students.

This chapter reviews the literature to build an understanding of culture and cultural identity as these are applied contextually to people of Caribbean heritage who now reside in Canada. The literature review of culture and cultural identity is extended to include generative cultural terms—diaspora, rupture, identity construction, imaginary landscapes—and cultural frames of reference developed through popular cultural events. As the educational landscape is the structure in which culture and cultural identities are interrogated as the foci for this study, it is befitting that I also consider the educational literature associated with these areas. In this context the terms multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and anti-racism will also be reviewed.

An Understanding of Culture and Cultural Identity: A Caribbean Perspective

Multi-disciplinary Definitions of Culture

An analysis of culture is extremely important to my work. Culture is a term which takes on many different meanings. These nuanced differences are dependant on the perspective or the lenses through which culture is analyzed. Conceptually, it is a key construct that positions, identifies, and contextualizes people of Caribbean heritage in Canada's dominant discourse. Its importance relates to the fact that many of the challenges educators face in the school system are associated with not having an understanding of the diverse cultures of students in the educational system. Recognizing that all individuals are endowed with some degree of "cultural encapsulation" (Howard as cited in Banks, 2002), and that they are striving to exist in a country with an official multiculturalism policy, I note that this juxtaposition of cultures has the potential for social dislocation and "social stratification" (James, 2003a, p. 201). Here James (2003a) defines social stratification as "a hierarchical system in which segments of the population are ranked on the basis of power and access to wealth and prestige" (p. 201). With this in mind, I strive for a better understanding of culture and cultural identity. The disciplines and areas of study that I drew on to define culture are anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and popular culture. The concept of culture can be linked with many other words or concepts and its definition can change moderately or dramatically to reflect the context in which it is used.

Anthropological Perspective.

Marshall (1998) defines culture as "a general term for the symbolic and learned aspects of human society, which is socially rather than biologically transmitted" (p. 137), and may be visceral to all societies. He characterizes it as "a learned complex of knowledge, belief, art, morals, law and custom" (p. 137). Marshall also states that the anthropological definition implies that culture is transmitted through teaching, and hence it may influence or be influenced by civilization and social stratification. This is perhaps the theoretical basis for the understanding of culture in the disciplines of history, economics, and sociology. The anthropologist Victor Turner (1982 & 1986), who studied many rituals and performances, characterizes culture as including such concepts as language, religiosity, and moral beliefs. He further defines culture as an expression of "an infinite assortment of positive and negative existent-values" (Turner, 1982, p. 14) from a person's past and present that come together to make meaning that is expressed in intelligible terms to others during communicative processes (Turner, 1982).

Edgar and Sedgwick (2002) provide a contemporary definition of culture from an anthropological perspective, without reference to the notion of high culture. They suggest: "Culture is the complex everyday world we all encounter and through which we all move." It originates at the point where humans dispense with what is natural to their environment in favour of manmade constructs such as artifacts and language" (p. 102). This reference to language is also taken up by theorists who "study language as a system of signs" (Cavallaro, 2001, p. 16). Accordingly, he suggests culture be defined "as a systems of signs; verbal and visual languages, movements, postures and gestures, buildings and furniture, clothes, accessories and menus [that] are open to semiotic decoding" (Cavallaro, 2001, p. 16).

Sociological Perspective.

From a sociological perspective, various post-modern theorists inextricably link culture with race and define these terms as social constructs (Dei, 1996a, 2000; James, 2003a). Dei (2000) suggests that society routinely articulates culture in racialized and hierarchical terms and, having said this, he defines culture as a social construct that is dynamic and is mediated in structures such as schools. Another sociological definition of culture comes from James (2003a), who states: "culture [is] a core set of [norms], values and expectations that exert tremendous influence on our lives, structure our worldview, shape our behaviour and pattern our responses" (p. 199). He goes on to state that in the context of our Canadian ideology, these norms, values, and expectations are grounded in Canadians' notion of multiculturalism "which promotes a culture that reflects social, ethnic and racial stratification" (James, 2003a, p. 199). On a holistic scale, James' other definition of culture is "the way in which a given society organizes and conducts itself as distinguished from that of other societies. [And that] culture consists of a dynamic and complex set of values, beliefs, norms, patterns of thinking, styles of communication, linguistic expressions and ways of interpreting and interacting with the world" (2003a, p. 201) in which we live.

Bhabha's (1994) sociological view of culture is dichotomous, incorporating a subjectivity that is colonial yet postcolonial, modern yet post-modern, and structural yet post-structural. Thus in his opinion, culture is said to be a double-inscribed, inanimate, paradoxical, and uncanny concept. At times it can be inscribed "with its disciplinary generalizations, its mimetic narratives, its homologous empty time, its seriality, its progress, its customs and coherence. [At other times it can be referenced as being] . . . distinctive, significatory, differential, interdisciplinary intertextual, international, [and] inter-racial" (pp. 136–137). This is an affirmation of Caribbean culture as our subject-position is an identity that draws on relationships between many ethnicities and allows for a fluid multi-culture.

Cultural Studies Perspective.

Seidman and Alexander (2001) define cultural studies as the study of "all aspects of the study of culture" (p. 100). Their definition of culture may be taken to encompass the diverse ways in which culture is understood and analyzed in such areas as sociology, history, ethnography, and education. As well, in their definition of identity, they allude to the idea that cultural identity is formed at the juncture of multiple intersecting discourses such as culture and nationality; culture, race and racialism; or culture and ethnicity. Seidman and Alexander (2001) state:

> Instead of assuming that individuals have an identity as, say, a woman or a black, or assuming that selves are produced by discourses in any simple way, they see individuals as being inserted into webs of discourses that always position us in multiple, intersecting ways. We are never simply a man or woman, white or black, but always assume many, intersecting subject positions or identities. Agency is always implicated in the way discourses position us—both constraining and enabling us. (p. 7)

Hall (2001) and other cultural studies' theorists define culture as the ensemble of meanings, beliefs, values, norms, and rituals that structure a society. Culture is both a source of meaning for individuals and communities and an ideological force related to power dynamics. The aim of cultural studies is to analyze culture in relation to lived experiences and in relation to social structural inequalities where it functions as a force of both dominance and resistance.

Gilroy (1991) has conceptualized culture as a notion that includes ethnicity and nationality within the context of Englishness. In his critique of culture and Englishness, he writes:

> I have grown gradually more and more weary of having to deal with the effects of striving to analyse culture within neat, homogeneous national units reflecting the "lived relations" involved with the invisibility of "race" within the field and most importantly, with the forms of nationalism endorsed by a discipline which, in spite of itself, tends towards a morbid celebration of England and Englishness from which [B]lacks are systematically excluded. (p. 12)

Gilroy (1991) defines culture "as a field articulating the life-world of subjects (albeit de-centred) and the structures created by human activity" (p. 17), but stipulates that "the contemporary tendency towards ethnic absolutism, … comes to view it [culture] as an impermeable shell, eternally dividing one 'race' or ethnic group from another" (p. 17).

Giroux writes in the intersection of cultural studies and critical pedagogy, and has been greatly influenced by the work that emerged in British cultural studies. He writes that "cultural studies is important to critical educators because it provides the grounds for making a number of issues central to a radical theory of schooling" (Giroux, 1992, p. 201). This is so because language, which is an important constituent of the production of meaning, is also a vital element in the relationship between knowledge and power. Cultural studies represent the rethinking of Marxist theories where the mass media are central and the actions of "social movements advocating gender, racial, and social justice" (Seidman & Alexander, 2001, p. 8) are prominent to the discourses of contemporary development.

Popular Cultural Perspective.

From the perspective of popular culture, I focus on the textiles and clothing discipline and the concepts of clothing and *dress*. Kaiser (1990) relates that "clothing refers to any tangible or material [culture] object connected to the human body" (p. 5). Dress as a verb refers to the "act of altering or adding to appearance" (Kaiser, p. 5), while dress as a noun refers to the material objects that are added to the body as well as the vast array of externally detectable body modifications (Kaiser; Roach & Musa, 1980). Cunningham and Voso Lab (1991) provide this synopsis: "Dress, in the context of popular culture, includes clothing worn in everyday life, by ordinary people, as they go about the daily activities of their lives and carry on the traditions that bring meaning to them" (p. 1). They add:

> We use clothing to communicate our individuality, and personality, our group and familial associations, our occupations, our status, our cultural identity, values and symbols, as well as our societal concepts of status, art, aesthetics and technology. We adorn our bodies in dress to fit into either the ideal standard for appropriate behavior or our own sense of aesthetics and beauty. (pp. 2–3)

Based on these perspectives, culture may be defined as a complex set of habits, learned behaviours, customs, beliefs, and ways of knowing the world that, though changing, are shared by a defined social group and transmitted to subsequent generations (Cunningham & Voso Lab, 1991; Kaiser, 1990; McCracken, 1988). Popular culture is the medium by which dress and other material culture artefacts "reflect political climate, technological patterns and economic conditions" (Cunningham & Voso Lab, p. 1). As such, the artefacts of popular culture "include the changing fashion and fads of the moment as well as more stable traditions, customs and folkways of society" (Cunningham & Voso Lab, p. 1). The treatment ascribed to dress can be applied to the music, songs, and dances that come out of the Caribbean. These have been used quite successfully in diaspora's contexts, such as Canada, as identity markers for people of Caribbean heritage (Walrond-Patterson, 1999).

The Cultural Identity Model

The consistent analogue with these definitions or understandings of culture is that the phenomenon appears to be embedded within the individual. In addition, aspects of culture are concentrated to varying degrees within the individual. Core cultural values are harder to eliminate and, in due course, serve as one's heritage. Material culture incorporates popular culture and when different cultures come together, cultural layering occurs. Though many believe that culture is a social construct, its uniqueness, individuality, and habitude suggest the difficulty that may be encountered when culture is ignored and suppressed in the classroom. This elucidation of the concept "culture" is necessary as it grounds my discussion of the terms diaspora and multiculturalism and their ramifications for education. Also, Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2005) write:

> DuBois's notion of double consciousness applies not only to African Americans but to all people who are constructed outside the dominant paradigm. Although DuBois refers to a double consciousness, we know that our sense of identity may evoke multiple consciousness, and it is important to read . . . [their particular]

> discussion or multiple consciousness, as a description of complex phenomena that impose essentialized concepts of "blackness," "Latina/o-ness," "Asian American-ness," or "Native American-ness" on specific individuals or groups. (p. 282)

This belief can be postulated for any human or group interaction and I will go a step further to assume that it also occurs when there is any other interaction with a material cultural artefact or cultural structure. Thus, as I began to make meaning of what my research participants were saying about culture and cultural identity, I proceeded to re-conceptualize my theoretical framework to include our collective understanding of these two terms. This aspect of my framework seeks to provide a model for culture and cultural identity. It is based on a human ecology model (Westney, Brabble, & Edwards, 1988) integrated with a social ecology model (Berry, 1995; Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to establish the one I am now using.

> This modified human or social ecology model consists of seven nested concentric circles with the individual situated in the centre; with the family, clothing, and the home in the second-most inner circle; sectored community structures in the third-most inner circle; sectored societal structures in the fourth circle, and sectored world structures in the fifth. The sixth realm (N_n) is undefined as this consists of entities that are unknown or unnamed at the present time. As cultural attributes subsume all sectors of these concentric circles, they are placed within the seventh and outermost circle. As the individual draws cultural attributes from all sectors of these concentric circles to varying degrees, the individual can be described as having several cultures. In other words, I visualized culture as a component of

> each of these sectors, contributing to the overall cultural identity of the individual, thus accounting for the notion of a multiplicity of cultures. (Walrond-Patterson, 2006, p. 336)

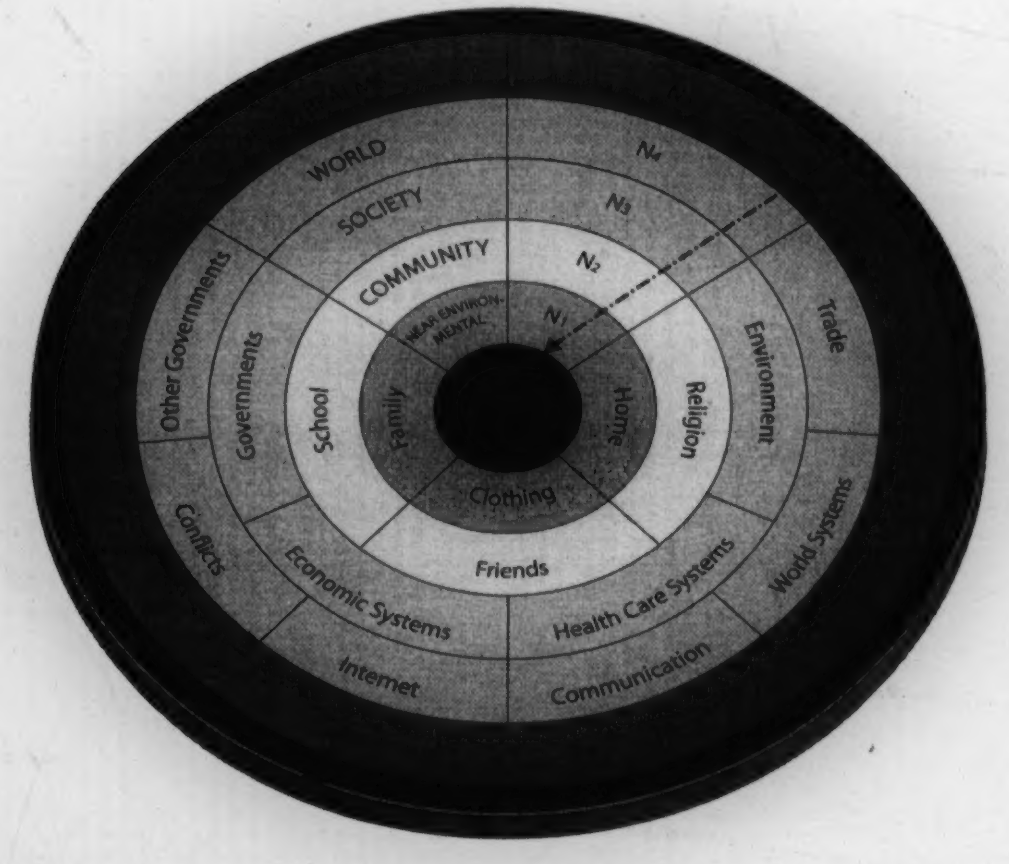
WORLD
SOCIETY
COMMUNITY
NEAR ENVIRON-MENTAL
N_4
N_3
N_2
N_1
Other Governments
Governments
School
Family
Home
Religion
Environment
Trade
Clothing
Friends
Conflicts
Economic Systems
Health Care Systems
World Systems
Internet
Communication

Figure 3. Cultural Identity Model modified from the Human Ecology Model (Westney, Brabble, & Edwards, 1988) and the Social Ecology Model (Berry, 1995; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

This new framework helps me to define culture within the context of a multicultural country such as Canada, and I can now use it to interpret Ogbu's (1992b) cultural model. The assumptions I make about cultural identity are:

1. An individual's cultural identity consists of a collective of cultures, not just a culture.
2. Culture identity may be static in moments or instants, but it is dynamic or fluid (Appadurai, 2003) across time and space.
3. Cultural attributes are transmitted through semi-permeable orifices, where the actors' "internalized social attitudes and expectations" (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2000, p. 134) determine the level of cultural transmission.
4. Cultural homeostasis exists in this environment. Cultural homeostasis is defined as the state of dynamic equilibrium that occurs when an individual is at the point of cultural harmony with and in his or her environment.

Culture, in this instance, is a function of all the various attributes (and their mitigators) that constitutes the various realms. I am now using all the levels of awareness that are at my disposal at this time to discuss the information I received during my data collection.

Cultural Identity

British Caribbean identities are a Métisage or a mixture of the many cultures that are present on the islands (Alleyne, 2002). Insufficient thought has been given to this form of cultural alliance (Maingot, 1996; Mintz, 1996; Stewart, 1986; Waters, 1999). Social class and gender were more important demographic classifications in the school system. With the exception of the few local Aboriginal people, we all claim a heritage that was foreign to the Caribbean. The "borderlines of the 'present'" arrangement that Bhabha (1994) references are synonymous with the Caribbean cultural identity experience. So we had a mixture of French, Spanish, Syrians, Chinese, East Indians, and African influences all subsumed by an overarching British colonial experience (Alleyne, 2002; Mintz, 1996). Within that fluidity of experiences we learned to be quite adaptable at school. None of these different strands of knowledge were recognized and most of our formal learning was based on the British system.

In order to come to a better understanding of culture and cultural identity as these concepts pertain to people from the Caribbean, their history must be analysed carefully. Our history includes definite attempts to strip us of a heritage culture. This meant that all of us were forced to give up our heritage languages and learn one that was imposed. We were forced to give up most of the knowledge that allows groups to construct culture. We lived in fear during slavery, and any attempts to practise our historical knowledge were clandestine. We constructed our lives in a landscape where any reference to our indigenous knowledge was taboo. The psychological impact of these actions is outside the scope of this research, but it suffices that it must have impacted on how we constructed cultural identity. In addition, our history includes one of emancipation, national independence, and the rise of individuals of enslaved heritage to prominent positions and leadership roles in our communities and countries. These historical experiences have equipped us with a particular world view and lenses to construct cultural identity that is unique to people of Caribbean heritage today (Alleyne, 2002).

How one identifies oneself culturally determines the extent to which one engages with cultural structures. Thus even within Caribbean heritage communities, essentialism statements cannot be made about the group's approach to education. Evidently those who identify themselves as of African heritage and having lost their identity markers may have more reason to distrust dominant systems. On the other hand, those who did not have to involuntary give up such identity markers as language and world view may have a more collective approach to development and could draw on historical identity constructs to interpret goals for self-development.

Critical Pedagogy

The discipline of cultural studies is informed by an understanding of culture and cultural identity. The work of Giroux (2006), which is vested in linking pedagogy to an understanding of how pedagogy works in popular culture to shape youth culture, is one of the most fitting bodies of knowledge that links cultural studies or cultural politics with critical pedagogy. Giroux (1994) suggests that critical pedagogy can be the catalyst that moves and incorporates cultural studies and its understanding of culture and cultural identity into the educational landscape. To quote:

> Within the next century, educators will not be able to ignore the hard questions that schools will have to face regarding issues of multiculturalism, race, identity, power, knowledge, ethics, and work. These issues will play a major role in defining the meaning and purpose of schooling, the relationship between teachers and students, and the critical content of their exchange in terms of how to live in a

> world that will be vastly more globalized, high tech, and racially diverse than at any other time in history. Cultural studies offers enormous possibilities for educators to rethink the nature of educational theory and practice, as well as what it means to educate future teachers for the twenty-first century. (¶ 8)

Having said this, he goes further and warrants that "the more progressive elements of critical pedagogical work can inform and be informed by cultural studies' emphasis on popular culture as a terrain of significant political and pedagogical importance" (¶ 10). Drawing on this body of knowledge, critical pedagogy can be defined as:

> [A] discourse for asserting the primacy of the political and the ethical as a central feature of educational theory and practice. Critical pedagogy makes clear that schools and other educational spheres cannot be viewed merely as instructional sites, but must be seen as places where culture, power, and knowledge come together to produce particular identities, narratives and social practices. In this case, critical pedagogy illuminates that schooling is not merely about the production of skills, but about the construction of knowledge and identities that always presuppose a vision of the future. (Giroux, 2006, pp. 5–6)

The genesis of critical pedagogy can be traced back to Paulo Freire. A Brazilian, his affluent middle class upbringing was interrupted by a stint of poverty experienced when his family lost their economic holdings. This first-hand experience aligned him with the struggles of Brazil's poor and his work among them influenced his belief that literacy was fundamental if the poor were to understand the nature of their oppression. He later joined Brazil's department of education as Secretary of Education where he was successful in initiating many literacy programs and in "making the educational process meaningful for teachers and pupils in low-income schools" (Carnoy, 1997, p. 17). His liberation pedagogy, "conscientização," . . . the essential ingredient in developing such meaning" (Carnoy, p. 17), worked well to strengthen the resolve of the individual and the collective into staging a coup in 1964. As a result he was exiled. Reflecting on this state of affairs he writes:

> At times, in one's fight for justice, one neglects seeking a more rigorous knowledge of human beings. One may underestimate the power of the dominant, ignore the deep-seated presence of the oppressor in the oppressed, and end up in exile. (Freire, 1997, p. 66)

His academic work had gained him respect among many revolutionary leaders where "[h]is literacy projects, frequently under his own direct supervision and daily involvement, focus for the most part on exploited colonies: Guinea Bissau, Grenada, Tanzania, El Salvador, and Nicaragua" (Gibson, 1994, ¶ 13). In arriving at an understanding of this type of pedagogy, he first problematizes the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed. He states:

> How can the oppressed, as divided unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation? Only as they discover themselves to be "hosts" of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberation pedagogy. As long as they live in the duality in which *to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the oppressor*, this contribution is impossible. The pedagogy of the

> oppressed is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanization. (Freire, 2005/1970, p. 28)

To this end, as an art and a science, critical pedagogy may be defined as "the integration in practice of particular curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, and evaluation, purpose, and methods" (Simon, as cited in McLaren, 2003a, p. 187). These practices inform how educators teach, what knowledge is valued, how this knowledge is understood, and how particular representations of self and others are constructed within the physical and social environment of the classroom (McLaren, 2003a). Critical pedagogy interrogates how educational culture is inextricably linked to power, takes an interventionist stance, and advocates for more inclusive classrooms. This approach is necessary because dominant political, social, and cultural agendas influence pedagogical practices and, in turn, are directly related to economic factors that also influence political, social, and cultural agendas of the dominant society.

McLaren (2003a) defines critical pedagogy or critical educational theory as a body of theories that "examines schools both in their historical context and as part of the existing social and political fabric that characterizes the class-driven dominant society" (p. 185). In this light he elaborates that critical pedagogy questions the logic inherent in "the positivistic, ahistorical and depoliticized" (McLaren 2003a, p. 185) treatment that is applied to the analysis of the "text." Even within this analysis of the text, there are fundamental gaps in the construction of truth. According to Aronowitz and Giroux (1993), "critical pedagogy has to take seriously the notion of cultural politics . . . by both legitimating and challenging the cultural experiences that make up the historical and social particulars that constitute the cultural forms and boundaries that give meaning to the lives ~~of~~ students and other learners" (p. 151).

Critical pedagogy analyzes the resultant issues that develop at the intersections of education and culture. On the one hand, several theorists such as McLaren (2003a, b), Giroux (1997), Darder (1991), and Weiler (1988) write on race, ethnicity, gender, and multiculturalism, and the power issues that mitigate and influence the type of education many students receive. They question relationships shaping the power that exists at the intersection of education and culture as they suggest some of the goals that critical pedagogues endorse. The practice of a critical pedagogue involves developing "forms of knowledge and classroom social practices that validate the experiences that students bring to schools [and give them] . . . an active voice in institutional settings that traditionally attempt to silence them by ignoring their cultural capital" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993, p. 151). Here, the cultural capital of the marginalized is defined as language forms, styles of presentation, dispositions, and forms of reasoning that ought to be included in the curricula that teachers develop or mediate. This cultural capital should influence the questions that are generated, and the problems that are posed (Aronowitz & Giroux).

Critical pedagogy, as some critical educational theorists suggest, is one method for providing a welcoming learning environment for non-mainstream students to develop. In addition, this teaching technique is recommended for the development of all students (Giroux, 1997; McLaren, 2003a, b). Importantly, many studies suggest that non-White students find schools to be an unwelcoming environment for them to express their culture and other developmental attributes (Codjoe, 2001; Henry, 1994; Walrond-Patterson, 1999; Walrond-Patterson, Crown, & Langford, 1998). Thus I turn to critical theorists to determine what measures would ameliorate this problem: "Critical theorists say the objectives of critical pedagogy are to empower the powerless and transform social inequalities and injustices" (McLaren, 2003a, p. 186). Teachers should use the classroom as an area that provides empowering opportunities for all students to examine society critically for personal emancipation and societal transformation. Critical pedagogy is based on the premise that the school's utmost responsibility is to teach for personal and social emancipation; this should be the foundation on which all other courses taught in its system are built (McLaren, 2003a). Such transformation is practised in "solidarity with subordinate and marginalized groups, and support options for the poor to examine critically conditions that encourage poverty and human suffering" (McLaren, 2003a, p. 118). Some theorists believe that having only a White, patriarchal, middle-class perspective about knowledge and its formation is not preparing students to live in a world that is more global in its outlook (McLaren, 2003a, Dei, 2008).

Critical theorists point to several reasons for rethinking the cultural context of the school environment. First, they say schools do not seek to promote social and economic mobility (McLaren, 2003). In fact, by tracking or streaming students, they seek to limit some students from actively participating to their full potential in all sectors of the economy (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2000; Contenta, 1993; Giroux, 1997; Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; McLaren, 2003a; Wotherspoon, 2004). Referencing a structural functionalist perspective (Karabel & Halsey, 1977), some critical theorists say that streaming and tracking ensures that non-mainstream students furnish the lower sectors of the economy, while mainstream students have more employment choices (Barakett & Cleghorn; Contenta; Giroux, 1997; McLaren, 2003a; Wotherspoon, 2004). Second, schools tend to operate using prescribed notions of cultural and national identity, which inform what is morally or socially acceptable (Giroux, 1997). Teachers are in a political role because they act as "agents in the production, circulation, and use of particular forms of cultural and symbolic capital" (Giroux, 1997, p. 43). Finally, Grace (2006) insists that critical education thinks "about collective human interests in relation to the culture-language-knowledge-power nexus" (p. 134); as a result it employs critical pedagogy because

> It draws on diverse discourses, including critical theory, 'post' theories, multiculturalism, and feminist discourses, to examine how educational policy, program design, and the fortunes of education are tied to the logic of corporate capitalism and techno-scientific emphases on efficiency, productivity, and predictability. This multiperspective approach values theorizing, which is a rational search for contradictions that go against the critical grain. (p. 134)

Analysis of Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy aims to emancipate individuals from their oppression, and in general, articulates what must be done in the school system to work through the issues raised at the intersection of education and culture. However, and again in general, many critical theorists have insufficiently attended to how powerless individuals can work to correct their perceived situation (Ellsworth, 1989; Fraser, 1998). Ellsworth's analysis of critical pedagogy in the education system suggests some of the critiques encompassing this philosophy. Ellsworth argues that "key assumptions, goals, and pedagogical practices fundamental to the literature on critical pedagogy—namely, 'empowerment,' 'student voice,' 'dialogue,' and even the term 'critical'—are repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination" (p. 298). As well, Ellsworth says:

> The classroom practices of critical educators may in fact engage with actual, historically specific struggles, such as those between students of color and university administrators, but the overwhelming majority of academic articles appearing in major educational journals, although apparently based on actual practices, rarely locate theoretical constructs within them. (p. 300)

Ellsworth also says she found the language of the definition more useful for a philosophical discussion, but highly problematic in trying to solve issues of "individual freedom, social justice, critical democracy, social change and 'universal' values than for thinking through and planning classroom practices to support the political agenda" (p. 300) of the community.

Students come to the education landscape with the intentions of acquiring knowledge. When these students are of middle class background and are aspiring teachers, and the learning landscape is multicultural, their intent is to learn how to teach in a multicultural community. Indeed their belief is also that higher learning institutes will fulfill this obligation. Holding true to this belief, Lauder, Brown, Dillabough and Halsey (2006) write: "education holds a unique position in modern societies because many people believe that it benefits society at the same time as meeting the aspirations of students and parents" (p. 1). Educators and students sharing similar backgrounds come to teaching with an understanding that this landscape is democratic, virtuous and fair because the learning objectives are aligned with those of education. But critical pedagogue invites educators and learners to embrace another concept of how knowledge is constructed. To do so, as educators and students, we must be prepared to suspend our past understandings of knowledge construction and to broaden our horizons to embrace other perspectives of knowledge construction. Both students and teachers must be willing to discover this path to a new sense of knowledge, and those who practise a critical pedagogy must be clear about the path through which they are leading their students.

For example, I think that in a multicultural society, it is essential that educators and students conduct a racial inventory and self-analysis before attempting to teach or educate about critical pedagogy in a multicultural environment. It is essential to reflect on the power posture adopted in dealings with others of different cultures, social classes, ethnicities, races and sexual orientations. Interrogating the discomfort experienced when faced with having to relinquish this power posture when encapsulated in a minority community is an important experience which must not be underestimated in coming to an understanding of critical pedagogy praxis. A sentiment that hooks (1994) expresses is:

> Despite the contemporary focus on multiculturalism in our society, particularly in education, there is not nearly enough practical discussion of ways classroom settings can be transformed so that the learning experience is inclusive. If the effort to respect and honor the social reality and experiences of groups in this society who are non white is to be reflected in a pedagogical process, then as

> teachers—on all levels, from elementary to university settings—we must acknowledge that our styles of teaching may need to change. (p. 35).

Many attempt a critical pedagogy in a multicultural setting without going through this self-analysis or self-reflection and are surprised when they cannot answer or cope with the serious questions or questioning that are required of critical pedagogy. Educators who fail to perform this self-analysis before introducing critical pedagogy may compensate for this failure by denying that critical pedagogy is an effective teaching tool, or by being overwhelmed by the students' requests for answers, or by providing temporary, short-range solutions that have no transformative learning success. Further, by not dealing with our own biases and assumptions from our own experiences, we may not appreciate the difficulty associated with a "transformative pedagogy" (hooks, 1994, p. 36).

When I, a critical pedagogue, teach a Society and Education course to a student body that is largely White and middle class, in a multicultural community such as Edmonton, I require that my students do a personal self-analysis after they have each immersed themselves in a multicultural environment that is dissimilar to their own circumstance. I suggest that they choose a community they have had no previous communication with. Not surprisingly, they are very timid about venturing into the unknown. They do not wish to lose sight of the shore or their own comfort zones as they chart unknown territory. They interrogate themselves at the nexus of their own racial identity and difference. That is, they will question their reactions in the culture of White and being blind, or White and being hearing impaired, or White and LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, and queer), but not, for instance, Aboriginality and LGBTQ, or Aboriginality and rural status, or Black and LGBTQ, or Black and any social or demographic attribute. Even with my middle-class minority students, their biased hegemonic impressions cause a range of emotions. When they confront these absences from the curriculum and academic landscape they display initial self-denial, followed by excuses, and finally anger, frustration, and questions about what they can do. Such is the outcome of having to take on a White hegemonic, Eurocentric veneer in order to succeed at school. They have never missed their heritage, and in fact, themselves in the curriculum, pedagogy or practices of their schooling.

These may be some of the challenges Ellsworth (1989) experienced when she introduced critical pedagogy to her university students. It is worth noting that the critical pedagogy course was introduced as a reaction to the racial accusations made by visible minorities against her teaching institute (Ellsworth, 1989). I believe that we all need to constantly interrogate ourselves about our racial and multicultural blind spots if we wish to succeed at teaching from a critical pedagogical perspective.

Ellsworth (1989) states that although there is much research on the theories of critical pedagogy, “there has been no sustained research attempts to explore whether or how the practices it prescribes actually alter specific power relations outside or inside schools” (p. 301). She claims one inherent difficulty with critical pedagogy is that even though there is recognition for multiple perspective views and reflective actions, there is yet no established method for dealing with the resultant desire to secure change when this change has to be negotiated in spaces characterized by power differentials. Many of those oppressed are neither knowledgeable about education policy nor aware of the extent to which education policy influences educational practice. Furthermore, many marginalized people have no experience working through the politics of policy development. They are not aware of the processes by which policies are developed and enacted. To this end hooks (1994) writes:

> Among educators there has to be an acknowledgement that any effort to transform institutions so that they reflect a multicultural standpoint must take into consideration the fears teachers have when asked to shift their paradigms. There must be training sites where teachers have the opportunity to express those concerns while also learning to create ways to approach the multicultural classroom and curriculum. (p. 36)

hooks continues that "we have to work consistently against and through the overwhelming will on the part of folks to deny the politics of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and so forth that inform how and what we teach" (1994, p. 37).

All the parents that I interviewed have experiences with educational systems. However I often wondered how effective they would be at articulating the problems. I feared that they would not be aware of the politics of education and culture's role in the politics of education. I came to conclude that while some were not conversant in the politics of education, their Caribbean educational experiences and their perspectives of these helped to contribute to their overall understanding of education. As the "researcher-as-bricoleur" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a, p. 4) and researcher-as "criticalist" (Kincheloe

& Mclaren, 2005, p. 304) I was able to make meaning of what our experiences were and what we felt they should have been in Edmonton's educational landscape.

Writing from an American perspective about West Indian immigrants in America, Mary Waters (1999) provides useful outsider theoretical work to help articulate the Caribbean value system and to establish some basic differences between West Indian immigrants and their African-American cohort. For example, Waters has analyzed the West Indian Black American experience and determined the following: "Black immigrants from the Caribbean come to the United States with a particular identity/ culture/worldview that reflects their unique history and experiences" (p. 6).

Waters (1999) goes on to write, "this culture and identity are different from the immigrant identity and culture of previous waves of European immigrants because of the unique history of the origin countries … [and] are also different from the culture and identity of African Americans" (pp. 6–7). In addition, her analysis showed that while Caribbean immigrants are at first valued for the social, cultural, and educational capital that they, as Blacks, bring to America, "the structural realities of American race relations, … persistent and obvious racial discrimination, low wages, poor working conditions, and discriminatory housing practices" (pp. 7–8) eventually contribute to their ghettoization. Under these conditions their children do not get the best education and the ethos of a culture that informs social mobility is now illusory.

Mary V. Alfred, of Caribbean heritage, is another theorist who researches in the area of adult immigrant learners, including those from the Caribbean who are now living and studying in the United States. Her research into the learning experiences of

Caribbean immigrant women in U. S. post-secondary institutions reveals that the Caribbean community was very supportive of education and placed a very high cultural value on it. However, these students found that very little of this cultural capital was transferable in U. S. post-secondary institutions, and in fact they were "often located at the margins" (Alfred, 2003, p. 242).

Thus both the arguments for and against critical pedagogy have to revert to Freire's (1993/2005) original postulation for critical pedagogy in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to determine his opinion about not only individual praxis, but also how the disenfranchised should proceed in order to obtain self-actualization. Freire (1993/2005) writes:

> Within history, in concrete, objective contexts, both humanization and dehumanization are possibilities for a person as an uncompleted being conscious of their incompletion.
>
> But while both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is the people's vocation. This vocation is constantly negated, yet it is affirmed by that very negation. It is thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of the oppressors; it is affirmed by their struggle to recover their lost humanity. (pp. 43–44)

While those committed to humanization have a commitment to social justice, dehumanization is a more pervasive cultural force impeding self-actualization and social inclusion. Thus critical pedagogy should be an active and not a passive construct because, as Freire (1993/2005) states, "dehumanization is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human" (p. 44). He goes on to suggest the following:

> Because it is a distortion of being more fully human, sooner or later being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so. In order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity, . . . become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both. (p. 44)

Historically, within the classroom, most forms of critical pedagogy appear to have resulted in just discussing and creating awareness of social and cultural problems. Indeed the objective of critical theorists seems to have focused on articulating the ontology and epistemology of people's existence. I viewed my research as reflecting on our reality and moving beyond to give the research participants some hope, opportunities for self-actualization and advancing social inclusion. To this end, I felt it was important to go back to Freire's writings to see where I would fit. Because I was doing insider research, and because I have read some of the theorists in this field, I bring to this research another perspective. I wanted to be hopeful and to move beyond the cynicism or despair emanating from dehumanization. Of this Freire (1993/2005) writes the following:

> Dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also . . . those who have stolen it, is a *distortion* [his emphasis] of the vocation of becoming more fully human. This distortion occurs within history; but it is not an historical vocation. Indeed, to admit of dehumanization as an historical vocation would lead either to cynicism or total despair. (p. 44)

He also claims that it is important to recognize when the softening of power is disguised as charity and generosity (Freire, 1993/2005). To this end, I support Ellsworth's desire to provide students and indeed their parents with the tools to fight for or to protect their rights within a socially just society as part of critical pedagogy's strategy. They must also understand how to deal with the politics of domination, oppressive action, cultural invasion and manipulation, as well as how to move their cultural projects forward (Freire, 1993/2005).

This latter task is not easy. Ellsworth (1989) claims that theorists of critical pedagogies have failed to provide "any meaningful analysis of or program for reformulation of the institutionalized power imbalances between themselves and their students, or of the essentially paternalistic project of education itself" (p. 306). I would add to this; administrators, school boards, school personnel, and the systemic power imbalances within the structures as a whole. Ellsworth contends that in the absence of this analysis and program reformulation, the educators who support this pedagogy "are limited to trying to transform negative effects of power imbalance within the classroom into positive ones" (p. 306). She goes on to state that this results in giving students the impression that equality in the classroom is attainable while in reality the teacher/student power relationship still exists. Freire (1993/2005), aware of this dichotomy, suggests the following:

> Reality which becomes oppressive results in the contradistinction of men as oppressors and oppressed. The latter, whose task it is to struggle for their

> liberation together with those who show true solidarity, must acquire a critical awareness of oppression thorough the praxis of this struggle. (p. 51)

Some questions arise from this analysis. Do parents and students deal with the tensions and frustrations that may arise because they may lack the acumen to initiate change? Do they retreat from the system entirely or do they see this as an opportunity to work within the system to challenge its mores? Do they understand that it may be necessary to use the master's tools to improve the master's house (a modification of Lorde's [1984] quotation)?

Education should strive to advance society and make some constructive changes. When education is framed in this manner it becomes logical, and hence relevant to the disenfranchised. However, education expressed as critical pedagogy has not been successful in this regard. Within critical pedagogy, the teacher/student relationship in the education system is such that student empowerment "has been defined in the broadest humanist term . . . that fails to challenge any identifiable social or political position, institution or group" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 307). Critical pedagogy within the education system in Canada should be about a politics of hope and possibility much more than reactionary approaches to problem solving. It ought to be about providing students with the tools to reflect critically on issues from multiple perspectives. This challenge is necessary for a politics of hope and possibility.

Cultural Pedagogy as Critical Pedagogy

Musical genres such as calypso and reggae and carnival street theatre have emerged in the Caribbean as effective teaching strategies, used to educate the citizens about their realities. These are cultural pedagogies which use figures of speech (for example, satire, hyperbole, and pun) to explain the activities of those structural forces that impact the lives of society's members. The immediate response to these outlandish lyrics is laughter, but subsequent reflection uncovers a deeper and more profound social message. This essentially is the primary objective of critical pedagogy which Freire (1993/2005) believes is an opportunity for "conscientiasion." Conscientiasion or conscientização in Portuguese is:

> [To] come to a new awareness of selfhood and [to] begin to look critically at the social situation in which [one] . . . finds [oneself] . . . often tak[ing] the initiative in acting to transform the society that has denied [the person] this opportunity of participation. (Freire, 1993/2005, p. 33)

Multiculturalism, Black Cultural Studies and Diaspora

Encountering Multiculturalism

I first encountered the term "multicultural" in an undergraduate Human Ecology class. The professor used the term to refer to those who were not of the dominant culture. I asked for an explanation about that use of the term and, sensing my professor's embarrassment, I did not probe further. However, my dismay lingered as I felt my culture was lumped in with all other cultures and devalued against the dominant one as though it was somehow inferior to that of the dominant society. Sitting in that class made me quite self-conscious in relation to the majority of my colleagues who, I assumed, were of the dominant culture. Still this course could have possibly been relevant because we were talking about the problems that arise when those of the dominant culture go to other places and impose their culture on others. However, while we discussed such issues as acculturation during the semester, I felt a vital opportunity was missed by the language used in that first class, which set the tone for any future discussions on the topic of culture. Even though I did not recognize it then, there was another important issue. This class had many international students along with Canadians of various ethnicities. I could not help but wonder about the rationale for fitting those international students into Canada's mosaic. Looking back, I realize now that I was trying to point out a general curriculum inadequacy: No allowance was made for dealing with the different cultural experiences of the students in that classroom. In other words, only one cultural difference was recognized in the classroom; the others were irrelevant (Apple, 1999).

My experience with being marginalized in the classroom is not an isolated event and is corroborated by hooks (1994) who writes about the hate and negative experiences she dealt with when she moved from being at the centre in her all Black school to the margins in a predominantly White school. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as a Practice of Freedom* (1994) and *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (2003) by hooks are critical to this research. Education as an act of emancipation was her first pedagogical experience as a student in an all-Black school with only Black teachers. As a student in the southern United States in the 1960s she was also part of the desegregation process and was bussed to a typical White school. Her schooling experience at the predominantly White school was, in her own words, that of an interloper; exposed to "an education that merely strives to reinforce domination" (p. 4). To transgress the borders of domination she incorporated critical pedagogy and feminist thinking into her teaching practices. After a teaching practice that spanned 20 years, her academic experience has evolved so that she has become a community teacher. In this capacity she takes on some of the issues of anti-racism education in academe. She writes:

> While it is a positive aspect of our culture that folks want to see racism end; paradoxically it is this heartfelt longing that underlies the persistence of the false assumption that this is not a white-supremacist nation. In our culture almost everyone, irrespective of skin color, associated white supremacy with extreme conservative fanaticism, with Nazi skin-heads who preach all the old stereotypes about racist purity. Yet these extreme groups rarely threaten the day-to-day workings of our lives. It is the less extreme white supremacists' beliefs and assumptions, easier to cover up and mask, that maintain and perpetuate everyday racism as a form of group oppression. (hooks, 2003, pp. 29–30)

Her thinking and articulation moved the debate of education dominance further and exposed the paradoxical dilemma for Blacks, in particular those of Caribbean Canadian heritage who contemplate personal and community emancipation. To emancipate is to allow for the creation of concientization strategies (hooks, 1994), but self-actualization should not be externally imposed and the fear is that academic discourse may not be in tandem with community reality.

Multiculturalism Theory

A Brief History.

In 1971, Canada became the first country to enact a multiculturalism policy as an ideology. In 1988, the Government of Canada enacted the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (Government of Canada, 2003). The preamble to the Act states that Canadians all benefit from rights enshrined in Canada's constitution, the Official Languages Act, the Citizenship Act and the Canadian Human Rights Act as proclaimed by our laws, and statutes. Canada is also a signatory to international conventions such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which give its citizens added protection, that is outside the scope of its laws (Department of Justice Canada, 1988). In addition to this, the government enacted policies that called attention to the growing nature of a multiethnic country. Canada's multicultural policy is included in Appendix 7. It recognizes the cultural and racial diversity of our society and promotes "the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society" (Department of Justice, Canada, 1985, sec. 3). However, although the Canadian government can be lauded for recognizing the diversity of the country, the manifold ways in which it has been debated since its implementation suggests that Canadian social structures were not prepared to deal with the tenets embodied in this policy. Jansen (2005) asserts that the government may not have even understood what would be required to uphold a multiculturalism ideology. For example, Jansen notes that in 1971 Canada's population was predominantly White. A multiculturalism policy at that time could have been seen by the public as a benign ideology geared for global appeal and national grandeur. Government immigration policies that removed the restrictions that were previously placed on Non-Whites were, however, being introduced at that time and this created a rise in immigration from places such as the Caribbean. The result was an influx of non-White immigrants, and a multicultural ideology, with no actual strategies for enforcement. Intellectuals who were versed in debates added to the discourse but not in ways that would benefit new immigrants. The average non-White immigrants who were perhaps grateful to come to Canada would not have been educated about the fundamentals of the multicultural policy or Act, and were left to take up the ideology in terms of festivals, fashions, and foods: what is often referred to as superficial multiculturalism. As Jansen writes:

> If and when a truly multicultural society exists, people of all cultures will be participating in decision-making about the future of the country. . . . Things will only change when minorities equally participate in facing the problems of society. The present legislation on multiculturalism is still considered by many to be a policy for minority groups, as a way for "true" Canadians to do something nice for minorities. (p. 31)

Jansen (2005) continues that cultural pluralism is the best option Canada could have chosen to recognize the nation's diversity. However, he writes that "the main problem has been the inadequate implementation of the policy" (p. 32).

The Debate.

Social and political theorists have criticized this policy that is intended to provide equitable opportunities in education, as well as equal opportunities for employment and participation in other social and cultural spheres. Some theorists view the multiculturalism legislation as "political correctness to its extreme" or the state's redundant and provocative appeal for equal recognition and changes in governance; they say this leads to societal stress (Gordon & Newfield, 1996; Taylor, 1994). Bannerji (2000) argues that multiculturalism is an ideology and distraction imposed on immigrants and other "non-whites." Cultural theorists of colour argue that it is a state and industry control apparatus that changes the focus from educational, social, and political rights to objectified cultural activity and community management (Bannerji; Carby, 1999; Davis, 1996; Hamilton, 1996; James, 2003a). Many also say that because our liberal democratic institutions are set up to normalize "white" behaviour and social and cultural systems, "non-whites" are still discriminated against even with the multicultural policy. For example, "Canada's Food Guide," the most popular Canadian government publication used in the school system, was only updated in 2007 to reflect Canada's multicultural demographic (Bueckert, 2007). Visible minority students, such as my children, were very often taunted about their food choices and sometimes would not eat at lunchtime for fear of being embarrassed. During this time, educational institutions viewed multiculturalism as an opportunity to invite marginalized groups, parents, and communities to the classroom to teach others about aspects of the "other" culture by introducing samples of their foods. These institutions reinforced assimilation to the dominant culture by emphasizing the dominant diet in the curriculum, while limiting the foods of non-dominant groups to erotic events not associated with the "foods and nutrition" unit of the curriculum. Young (2001), in opposing the assimilationist model, advocates a multiculturalism discourse that defends the inclusion of difference as an equal constituent if society is to be serious about universal humanity as a basic right. She writes: "The assimilationist ideal retains significant rhetorical power in the face of continued beliefs in the essentially different and inferior natures of women, Blacks, and other groups" (Young, p. 203). Her ideals about multiculturalism are still to be achieved in the field of education and the larger society. Gillborn (2004) states "A deconstruction of multicultural education, presenting it as a tokenism gesture meant to placate minority students and their communities while preserving intact the traditional curricular core" (p. 36) only reinforces dominant societal agendas. However, as Young notes, the "Other" continues to contest and even to reject the assimilationist model that is based on the premise of inequality of groups. She states, "Instead they have seen self-organization and the assertion of a positive group identity as a better strategy for achieving power and participation in dominant institutions" (p. 203). Failures of the assimilationist model can be attributed to the flawed assumptions of human nature and unrealistic expectations. It was assumed that urbanization brought about by modernization and the legislation of equality rights would result in a decline in "particularist affiliations" (p. 204). In reality, though, as individuals gained more rights through legislation, a rise in agency resulted which saw them advocating for increased group identity. She cites as examples stronger community and agency action among women, Aboriginals, Latinos, Blacks, and gays and lesbians (Young, 2001).

Research has led both Carby (1999) and James (2003a) to conclude that the issues stressed in the multiculturalism curricula do not address the ones that "non-whites" face in democratic states. My research to date indicates that such exclusion exists in Alberta (Walrond-Patterson, 1999). As a result, while there is awareness that schools must encourage "discourses and practices of diversity" (James, 2003b, p. 140), more needs to be done to make this a reality in a Caribbean Canadian context in Alberta's schools. Within Canadian schools, educators are still working to identify how issues of race identity and representation implicate or have a bearing on learning outcomes for youth (James, 2001).

The Concepts

Multicultural Education

Multiculturalism in structures such as education and multicultural education are concepts that are understood and explored quite differently in school systems and sometimes it may be difficult to know what the objectives for these programs or practices are. For example, is the objective to adhere to the tenets of Canada's multiculturalism policy and act, or is multicultural education a response to the increasing nature of diversity in schools? As this particular discussion falls outside the scope of this dissertation, both views will be held under the rubric of multicultural education.

The approach taken here to develop a community model for multicultural education draws on theories developed within anti-racism education/pedagogy and cultural studies. Here anti-racism education is defined as "an action-oriented educational strategy for instructional, systemic change to address racism and interlocking systems of social oppression" (Dei, 2000, p. 27). While recognizing the contributions that policies formulated as multicultural education have made to promote tolerance in schools, I believe that, as the literature suggests, the salient problems that racism produces have not been addressed. Thus multiculturalism education, as a concept for positive school outcomes for children of Caribbean heritage, has not been adequately successful to date. Missing from the curriculum discourse are a thorough understanding of culturally relevant teaching and culturally responsive teaching and their praxis (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Also missing from the educational landscape in Edmonton is any attempt to deal with teacher and student race. The mirror factor or a teaching staff that reflects the ethnic and cultural composition or our community is missing from the educational system in Edmonton as it is in many other structures. There is a lack of visible minority teachers in students' junior formative years. In the senior high school some are present but mainly in disciplines such as mathematics, and the science courses. Although Howard (2005) writes about his research in the USA his experiences are applicable to the Edmonton teaching landscape. He states, after discussions with many teachers, that their philosophy can be summed up as follows:

> I don't understand all of this talk about differences. Each of my little . . . students comes to me with the same stuff. It doesn't matter whether they're Black,

> Hispanic, or White, they each have a brain, a body, and a family. They each get the same curriculum. I treat them all alike. (Howard, 2005, p. 29)

He also suggests that teachers have not rigorously interrogated themselves in terms of knowledge of self as this applies to their passion for equity; they do not know their students in terms of competencies in cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching (Howard, 2005).

Multiculturalism, as a federal government act, encourages ethno-cultural celebrations and associated outward expressions of identity (Bannerji, 2000; James, 2001). Yet, race theory shows that individuals from non-White groups, which include Caribbean immigrants, are racialized in the school system and subject to special treatment (Bannerji; James, 2003a). This special treatment includes a temporal focus on the group (Black History Month) where community members are invited into the classroom to share their "dish, dance and dialect" or "the three S's (saris, samosas and steel band) [with the dominant group] to characterise . . . superficial multiculturalism" (Gillborn, 2004, p. 36). At other times the group's experiences and histories, which have not been completely developed, are given only limited exposure or are not included in the school curriculum. Frequently our youths are viewed as having only athletic potential or as economic inputs to a system that will allow them access to only low-paying, low-status jobs.

Viewing Education in the Caribbean Context

Caribbean Geo-Historical Context.

The British Caribbean region, from where my research participants and I emigrated, consists of a group of islands bordering the Caribbean Sea, which is east of Central America, north of South America, and south of Miami, Florida (see Appendix 3). For the purpose of this research, I am also including Guyana, South America, as it is the only English-speaking country in South America and because it is culturally, socially, economically, and politically linked to the English-speaking Caribbean region.

This Caribbean region's history includes socio-economic relationships between a colonizing Eurocentric plantation society and a colonized group consisting of enslaved Africans, indentured South-Asians, and Asians, and the few groups of Indigenous Amerindians that are now dispersed throughout the area. The latter occupied the Caribbean area copiously and liberally during the pre-Columbian epoch. In the context of the history of the Black[4] Caribbean region, education and development are two nuanced and complex concepts. Beckford (1976), whose thesis contributes to the sociology of Caribbean education, writes that "modern Caribbean society displays structural forms that are a direct legacy of the slave plantation system [and that] this legacy provides the single most important clue for an understanding of contemporary Caribbean society" (p. 30).

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[4] The tern Black has been racialized as pertaining to phenotypical characteristics (Wright, 2000), more reciently however it is used to refer to a particular group of "people with family origins in the Caribbean and/or Africa" (Ladson-Billings & Gillborn, 2004, p. 3).

Our Historical View of Education.

The cultural framework of this type of society is based on cultural pluralism and acculturation towards that of the dominant White society (Beckford, 1976). He further contends that "during slavery educational opportunities were restricted" (p. 37), and after emancipation even though educational opportunities improved they were geared towards skills useful to the plantation. Blacks shunned this activity and sought social mobility, aspiring instead to a European lifestyle (Miller, 1976). Education was therefore one of the factors which differentiated those individuals "who had 'made it' from those who had not" (Beckford, p. 38). Within this highly socially stratified society, education is seen as a means of social mobility. As Miller (1976) writes:

> [The lower strata] have always been interested in education and participate in it for social mobility reasons: "To amount to somebody in life," "To become somebody important," "To be able to get a good job and be respected." They have never been interested in education in order to keep the economy on an even keel or to become efficient farmers. (p. 62)

However the enslavers/colonizers' views of education were totally different. A quote from Nyerere (1968) sums up the purpose of education after slavery and during colonialism. He states: [Education] was motivated by a desire to inculcate the values of the colonial society and to train individuals for the service of the colonial state" (p. 269). Similarly the purpose of education for people of the Caribbean is challenging to define. Friboulet (2005) provides a modern definition of education as a learning process that enables societal, interpersonal and psychological empowerment, participation in development, and lifelong learning. Hence in this dissertation, informal, non-formal and formal forms of education are included within the context of basic education. As I will elaborate in my analysis, after emancipation the slave owners viewed education as a requirement for economic development and not as a means to building individual or collective identities. On the other hand, as the literature, my experiences, and those of my research participants will show, Blacks in the Caribbean viewed education as a means for constructing social and cultural identities.

Development is associated with economics, growth, blossoming progress, and expansion (Rist, 1997/1999). In this respect it is difficult to conceive or comprehend if formerly enslaved Africans would have valued country or state development above individual freedom. Development was an individualistic exercise for Blacks in the Caribbean. It must be remembered that at emancipation, the emotional associations most individuals from this group had with the development of the country were negative psychological reminders of slavery. These reminders were the eradication of native African languages, culture and ways of knowing, all of which were important for individual and community development. Julius Nyerere's (1968) definition of development would have been quite fitting to describe the freed slaves' perspective of the term. He defines development as the state of being where one has acquired the values of colonial society and is able to be of service to the colonial state. From this axiological position how should those who live with a legacy of enslavement value education as prescribed by the heretofore enslavers? As well, how would they establish their own goals for education? Nyerere also writes that 'school' or formal education is not a necessary organization for development. He states: "[The] purpose [of education] is to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society, and to prepare the young people for their future membership of the society and their active participation in its maintenance or development" (p. 268). On the basis of these understandings, one can appreciate the dilemma that faced Blacks in the Caribbean in terms of development and education. While individual development was desired, collective development was not a world view that was embraced. Yet, in some way, for them, there was the realization that their personal development was contributing to the development of the nation state. To tease out this dilemma, I will analyze our Caribbean education to show how education eventually contributed towards Black Caribbean development. As I stated earlier, the three types of education I analyzed were formal education, informal education (knowledge gleaned in informal settings) and non-formal education (knowledge gained in familial surroundings). I argued that formal adult education contributed to economic and social development, informal education contributed to political development, and non-formal education, which critiqued formal education, contributed to economic, social and cultural development.

Cultural Studies

The discipline of cultural studies articulates how individuals use culture within the context of a diaspora experience to make meaning of and for their lives. Cultural studies also exemplifies that culture is a phenomenon with fluid attributes that can withstand disruptions and accommodate métissage. Cultural studies also show that individuals are quite skilled at choosing cultural attributes from specific or several ethnic domains to define their cultural identity.

Culture and School Success

Ogbu (1992b), listing four elements under the rubric of community forces, suggests the following:

> An essential key to understanding the differences in the school adjustment and academic performance of minority groups is understanding of (a) the cultural models a minority group has with regard to the U.S. society and schooling, (b) the cultural and language frame of reference of a minority group, (c) the degree of trust or acquiescence the minorities have for White Americans and the societal institutions they control and (d) the educational strategies that result from the above elements. These four factors are dependent in part on the group's history, its present situation and its future expectations. (p. 289)

Ogbu (1992b), who works within a quantitative paradigm, applies this statement to minority groups in an American system. If we apply his elements to Caribbean-Canadian immigrant families we may expect them to be successful. First, it deals with minority groups of which the Caribbean group is a member. And second, these youths belong to a diaspora group, which is a voluntary minority group, and the families face similar problems that visible minority immigrants face within a larger society (Waters, 1999). On the basis of these facts, I make the assumption that his thesis can be applicable to the collective in a Canadian context.

Diaspora Studies

From diaspora studies there is the understanding that immigrants, whether voluntary or involuntary minorities[5] (Ogbu, 1991), have demonstrated a capacity to hold on to cultural traditions even when the dominant group discredits these and bans cultural practices. Also, from Ogbu (1992b) we read that "voluntary and involuntary minorities differ not only in initial terms of incorporation into … [dominant] society but also in their cultural models of what it means to be minority, how to get ahead, and the role of education in getting ahead" (p. 292).

Cultural Values

The theoretical framework for this research is based on the belief that people of Canadian-Caribbean heritage are a heterogeneous group whose cultural values determine how they view and value education. Waters (1999), who investigated Caribbean immigrants, shows that they do not constitute a monolithic group. C. L. R. James (1963/1983), Henry (1994), and Waters (1999), who write about the educational experiences of people of the Caribbean, point to the importance the group places on education as a means of social status advancement. Waters also states that the Black immigrants from the Caribbean, on first arrival to the United States, believed that industriousness is necessary for advancement, but that it takes only one generation for disillusionment to consume the group's psyche resulting in the loss of faith in the "American Dream" philosophy.

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[5] "*Voluntary minorities* are *immigrant minorities* [who] have generally moved to their present societies because they believe that the move would lead to more economic well-being, better overall opportunities or greater political freedom. *Involuntary minorities* are people who were brought into their present society through slavery, conquest or colonization" (Ogbu, 1991, pp 8–9).

One of the mitigating circumstances in this analysis is education and the education system. Many theorists whose research work is at the intersection of social theory, cultural studies, and education—such as DuBois, Fanon, Gilroy, Giroux, James, and McLaren—have variously subscribed to the notion that knowledge filtration through the medium of education works to produce individuals who are mirror images of the dominant group's designate. From a Black cultural perspective, DuBois (1903/1990) refers to this as "double consciousness" (p. 8) while the whole premise of Fanon's (1967) "Black skin, white mask" (pp. 8–9) is predicated on the concept of mélange or mixed identities.

Another phenomenon prevalent in the educational system in the Caribbean is its highly structured and disciplined system demonstrated by a strict dress code and authoritarian teacher involvement in student school life. Many teachers view their role as a vocation, morally and socially obligatory (Collins, 2000a & b). How is this community cultural belief manifested in the classroom? In general, how is the evolution of Black culture and the exposure to it received within the educational structure? For the African diaspora, "place" is a complex associative concept across landscapes in today's world. In the Canadian context this complexity is quite compelling for people of Caribbean heritage, challenging them to articulate history, culture, and community in ways that give youth a place, a past, and a present. Youth ought to be able to say who they are and who they wish to be.

The Black Experience

In the domain of popular culture, Black Caribbean Albertan youth live in the shadow of African American youth while their Caribbean carnival culture and family values take them back to the West Indies and diaspora politics take them back to Africa. How are these students dealing with cultural representation in the Canadian school system with its notion of an ambiguous national culture, expressed as agreeably amorphous cultural diversity? Bhabha (1995) writes, "cultural diversity is the recognition of pre-given cultural 'contents' and customs, held in a time-frame of relativism; it gives rise to anodyne liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange or the culture of humanity" (p. 206). This may lead to further assumptions. For example Hall (1995) writes of the fictitious notion that

> "The Black experience," as a singular and unifying framework based on the building ~~up of~~ identity across ethnic and cultural differences between the different communities, became "hegemonic" over other ethnic/racial identities – though the latter did not, of course, disappear. . . .
>
> The struggle to come into representation was predicated on a critique of the degree of fetishization, objectification and negative figuration which are so much a feature of the representation of the black subject. There was a concern not

> simply with the absence of marginality of the black experience but with its simplification and its stereotypical character. (p. 223)

Hall (1995) writes that recognizing that Black is not an essential subject also connotes the recognition of the political implications of the term "black," which is the recognition of the diversity of subjectivities, social experiences and cultural identities. This is an important assertion because it points to the recognition of the individual Canadian child of Caribbean heritage who has optimum options for self-actualization. Hall's cultural analysis is focused on the recognition of the individuality of the child with respect to identity, cultural and potential. It is thus particularly important in the field of education because it guarantees "a continuously contingent, unguaranteed, political argument and debate: a critical politics, a politics of criticism" (p. 225) about all that was heretofore thought to be canonical truths. This is a reminder that educators must understand the subjectivities of all their students so that the students' growth and development will be positive experiences.

If the term Black is conceived as a diverse complex concept then teachers will view students as individuals with varying potentials. If the community's expectation is for the teacher to view the student as unique and different, then the teacher, student, and parent are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the student achieves his or her full potential. This shift in thinking is in and of itself a very political strategy, because as Hall (1995) points out, "formulation may seem to threaten the collapse of an entire political world" (p. 225). Axiomatically, a shift in thinking allows the community to reflect on the way it works through the politics of education and achievement. Once again Hall states:

> This does not make it any easier to conceive of how a politics can be constructed which works with and through difference, which is able to build those forms of solidarity and identification which make common struggle and resistance possible without suppressing the real heterogeneity of interests and identities, and which can effectively draw the political boundary lines without which political contestation is impossible without fixing those boundaries for eternity. (p. 225)

This shift in thinking may thus lead to teachers and parents to form allegiances and align themselves to advocate for assurance that all students in the classroom achieve their potential.

The Immigrant Experience

Another concept that must be considered in doing research in immigrant communities is the fact that culture is not static. According to Hall (2003), culture is a fluid concept characterized by arbitrary closure, with respect to time, place (geography), and context. This is especially true of those who migrate with fixed and frozen notions of home, complicating family dynamics. Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) cite Mead, who writes that "changing people's habits, people's ideas, people's language, people's beliefs, people's emotional allegiances, involved a sort of deliberate violence to other people's developed personalities" (p. 26). Therefore cultural transference may not be as natural an occurrence in the home as Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba themselves write. The school-age children may drive the cultural change in the home and the resulting cultural conflicts may contribute to parental intimidation and their reluctance to participate in school activities. For example respect for elders, parental school responsibility, and discipline methods may not be the same as they were contextually in the Caribbean. A change in context, both temporal and special may make such previous habits dated and not appropriate today. Therefore, Hall's (2003) and Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's examinations of culture lead to the conceptualization of the relationship between the Caribbean first-generation immigrant home and the education system. Brathwaite (1996) writes about the involvement of some West Indian parents in their school-age children's activities, and she observes that some parents did not get the necessary encouragement from teachers. She writes:

> My experience has been that when parents organize to change the power relations between the educators and institutions versus the parents and community, there is more often than not much tension generated between the home and school. (p. 114)

Brathwaite (1996) continues:

> Some parents have confessed that until they had the good sense to communicate with others and join an organization working for educational improvements for Black students, they were isolated in their local school, believing that it was only their child who was experiencing racial discrimination; it was only they who had a *problem.* (p. 115)

At this point, can or should an argument be made for more parental and community involvement in the education of their youth?

Drawing on theory from cultural studies and anti-racist discourse, the following questions might be asked:

1. How do the evolution of culture and the cultural politics mitigate in the school system? For example, there is Stuart Hall's notion that culture is a fluid concept with arbitrary closure influenced by time, geography and place. Also, even with indoctrination by some other more dominant cultural system, groups still seek to hold on to aspects of their culture. This is now more obvious in contemporary, cultural globalization and the present "complex construction of imaginary landscapes" (Appadurai, 2003, p. 29). Another of Stuart Hall's notions is related to the layering aspect of culture or "the theorization of creolization, *métissage, mestizaje*, and hybridity" (Gilroy, 2003, p. 51). Youths have displayed evidence that they wish to identify with aspects of their heritage culture while assuming varying aspects of other cultures. How do teachers understand their students' composite identity?
2. Parents of Caribbean heritage are familiar with an educational system where their parents were not required to be very involved with aspects of schooling. This does not detrimentally affect the outcomes of school children because the teachers in the Caribbean are usually familiar with the community's cultural values and the family's cultural values as well. Parents can trust that the teachers will impart

similar values to the children they teach. How would this desire for parental and community involvement manifest itself in the Canadian school culture?

3. What aspects of critical pedagogy can be applied to developing a cultural pedagogy that addresses Caribbean history and culture in school and community sites? Critical pedagogy uses pedagogical practices "to develop creativity in communication and action in order to recreate reality and to recreate oneself in the process" (Diaz, 1993, pp. 76–77). Critical pedagogy allows students to engage in critically questioning what they encounter in society, to participate in activities that work toward change in society, allow for all students to feel comfortable to participate in their education, and to educate them for global citizenship. Students of Caribbean heritage are more likely to have appreciation for this pedagogical approach because they will be the obvious beneficiaries. How can educators convince Caribbean heritage students that this approach benefits them, when these students do not see themselves being fairly represented in educational or social structures? These students may not recognize the power relationships that undergird the education system, putting White students in a privileged position while simultaneously disadvantaging other students. Thus, how does the notion of cultural democracy coupled with the lack of recognition in terms of power relations in Alberta's school system work to impact the reality of students in this system?
4. How does a contemporary understanding of multiculturalism in Canada enable or inhibit work to build a public cultural pedagogy around Caribbean history and

culture? Cultural pluralism is a reality in Canada. However, Bannerji (2000) writes that many view multicultural policy as one that promotes the celebration of ethno-cultural festivals in schools. Parents are sometimes invited to share their culture with the class. This is usually in the form of foods and fashion. On many occasions community members are invited to classrooms during Black History Month or on the "Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination." These events only serve to reinforce the notion of "the other" and do little to foster a climate of critical pedagogy. What are students', parents' and teachers' perceptions of these initiatives? What could schools and educators do to ensure the integration of non-mainstream cultural themes and indigenous knowledge into the school's curriculum? What supports do educators need to implement practices?

5. How do the notions of Black masculinity and Black female complacency in the school system contribute to how these students see themselves in the school and in society? Abdel Shehid (2000) writes that today in Canada many prominent athletes are Black. Thus in the absence of a concomitant and similar achievement level in other spheres—academic, business, and political—this phenomenon places unreasonable and somewhat skewed expectations on Black youth (K. James, 1996). K. James says, "I am interested in athletics but I do not want teachers to assume that it will be my major interest in school . . . because while I may participate in a sport, I am aware of the importance of a balance between sports and academics and will keep that in perspective" (1996, p. 303). Many parents believe that this problematic situation extends from the teachers to the

students and the peers of these youths, where they are seen as jocks or potential jocks. Solomon (1992) defines jocks as "a black clique of high-profile senior boys, [who] are all rooted in a West Indian ancestry and culture. . . . [They] start with a small nucleus and [expand] . . . to other peripheral members such as teammates, and neighborhood buddies" (p. 33). In my readings Black female youth seem to be more or less absent from the discourse or occupy a position referential to Black male youth. For example, Solomon (1996) wonders about the fate of females who enter into relationships with the Jocks. My personal experience with my two girls in the school system is that the teachers held different expectations for them and were ambivalent towards them.

Nowhere in the above examples do I see myself. My school experiences provided me with opportunities to participate in intramural activities; to belong to "House clubs," the camera club, and the Girl-Guides; to sing in the school choir, dance in the school concert; and still have time for academics. School was a place for me to arrange weekend hikes, plan summer camping activities, or organize the spring tea and later school dances with my friends. Parental involvement was minimal and my teachers taught and inspired us, exemplifying that teaching was their vocation. In contrast as a parent in the Canadian school system, I spent a lot of time being involved with my girls' education and with their "extra-curricula" activities. These extra-curricula activities were the same ones I did within the context of school. These are only a few of the cultural differences I have encountered. My intent in this dissertation will be to analyze these cultural differences to see if and how they influence achievement.

Fortunately, as I do this research in the Caribbean-Albertan community early in the new millennium, it coincides with a heightened sense of community achievement that intersects with the redesigning and testing of Alberta's Social Studies K–12 curriculum and the introduction of a Black History/Studies 15/25 course, which was piloted in an Edmonton school in 2004. These curricular changes give various communities an opportunity to discuss and analyze what programs are best suited for Caribbean-Albertan students, Black diaspora students, and the student population in general. In the Caribbean-Albertan community many contentious issues are being raised about education. This information will be shared and the issues will be discussed in Chapter Five.

The multifaceted foci of my research will provide useful information. Most Caribbean immigrants have witnessed the second generation of persons of Caribbean heritage go through Alberta's education system. Moreover, it is now time to evaluate their level of achievement to determine how the community has been served by this system and to analyze if Caribbean-Albertan children are equipped to meet the economic and social challenges of the third millennium. Further, it will give those interested in the educational outcomes of Caribbean-Albertan youths an opportunity to reflect on the document that is produced and provide information for any possible future direction they may wish to pursue.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS USED IN SEEKING OUT THE CANADIAN CARIBBEAN EXPERIENCE

Introduction

> *But if knowledge of the social (as opposed to the physical) world resides in meaning-making mechanisms of the social, mental, and linguistic worlds that individuals inhabit, then knowledge cannot be separate from the knower, but rather is rooted in his or her mental or linguistic designations of that world (Polkinghorne, 1989; Salner, 1989 cited in Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 202).*

In Chapter One I developed reasons that supported the importance for this dissertation. To review, these are my understandings of rupture, lack of recognition, and their inherent consequences for self-actualization. Informed by this knowledge, I acquired a better understanding about how these concepts were playing out in my children's education and the reasons for my constant struggle to help them achieve what I felt was possible in Edmonton's education landscape. In Chapter Two I reviewed the literature to glean a better understanding of culture, Black cultural studies, multiculturalism, and diaspora. As a result of my understandings, I constructed a model for cultural identity and introduced Ogbu's (1992b) theory that focused on culture and school achievement.

Chapter Three takes up this relationship of culture and school achievement to apply it specifically to the case of Black Caribbean Canadians. I will interpret my own reflections and my participants' conversations using a critical, emancipatory, epistemological and ontological interpretative paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) along with a cultural studies model to explore the research questions. To simplify this process, I provide a conceptualization of the theoretical framework that is required to examine the research questions.

Theoretical Framework

To explore the first question—As parents, what are your experiences with education in the Caribbean, and with formal K–12 education in Edmonton's public schools—I used cultural studies perspectives and applied Ogbu's (1992b) theory about culture and school success. With specific reference to the Caribbean subjectivity, I have chosen to focus on Caribbean Canadian cultural identity and our understanding of education.

An elaboration of Ogbu's (1992) research is necessary once again. Ogbu observed the educational patterns of three groups, which he defined as the dominant culture, voluntary minority culture group, and an involuntary minority culture group. African Americans and native Aboriginals belong to the involuntary minority group, while minorities who were recent American immigrants belong to the voluntary minority group. His research showed that those of the dominant groups, on average, did well in school, and that voluntary minorities, on average, did better than the involuntary minority group. He isolated the concepts that influenced the voluntary minority's educational success as being their educational culture, the group's culture and language frame of reference, and the degree of trust the group had with dominant social structures. The cultural frames of reference, which are applicable to this dissertation's framework, are our education history, our experiences with formal, informal and non-formal education. According to Ogbu's (1992b) theory, then, the people of Caribbean Canadian heritage's relationship to education should be similar to what was noted historically and any diaspora changes should have a positive influence.

To explore the second and third questions, I looked at multicultural theory, diaspora studies, cultural studies, cultural politics, and the relationship of these concepts to development. The second and third research questions were: To what extent did the Edmonton public school system effectively provide your children with a holistic education that included a cultural focus? And, what changes within the system and in the perception of teachers, as mediators of Alberta's education system, need to occur to bring about those outcomes? The second question required establishing the relationships between the culture of people of Caribbean Canadian heritage and the culture that plays out in the educational landscape. The third question required a critical theory model response. This approach allowed the researcher to establish relationships between the culture of Caribbean Canadians and the curriculum, pedagogy and practice in Edmonton's educational terrain to gain insights into what possible outcomes for self-actualization were to be expected. Giroux (2006) proposes that there is an interlocking relationship "between the structure of power and the pedagogical force of cultural politics" (p. 3). Both the second and third questions deal with the power relationship and the cultural politics that exist between the children and the Caribbean Canadian community as these juxtaposed with the existing power structures in the education landscape. Additionally, the research participants' stories will reveal that pedagogical practices inherent in their informal and formal educational experiences link their learning to social change, and in some cases, the theory to practical emancipatory practices (Giroux, 2006), which in and of themselves were historically situated. Historical situatedness, in the experiences of my research participants, comes into focus when reflecting on the outcome of public pedagogy in the context of Caribbean education.

Giroux (2006) continues his analysis by stating that by "linking pedagogy to an understanding of both how domination works in its diverse forms and how public pedagogy can be used as a powerful resource for engaging people in robust forms of dialogue and activism" (p. 4), educators can explore other literacies that help to historically, culturally and morally engage their students. I hope to show how my participants' historical and current insights concur with this statement. Further, Giroux (2006) contends that:

> We need to develop social literacies that are functional, cultural, and critical [and that in education] we need literacies that recognize both the importance of cultural differences and the importance of individuals communicating across various social, cultural, and political borders. (p. 4)

It follows that if I were able to show how people of Caribbean heritage historically have used this form of pedagogy to make meaning of their lives, in their teaching and learning situations, then I could advocate to educators that in providing "culturally relevant conceptions of knowledge" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 81), they will be able to tap into a Caribbean phenomenon that is part of our knowledge base. This exercise may help

Caribbean Canadian students to appreciate their forms of knowledge construction and may also (re)create a practice that helps them and others to analyze their environments critically for possible growth and development.

Justification for Qualitative Research Methods

Educational Community Consideration

This body of work will hopefully provide insightful information for those who make educational policy decisions in Alberta's school system. Ogbu (1992b) states that community forces, which serve to distinguish minority groups who face similar structural barriers, have received very little attention in research projects. In light of this statement, my research with Canadian-Caribbean people in Edmonton will add to the body of comparative research which has already been completed with minority groups, as it seeks to differentiate our world views from those of African-Americans. My research has been placed within the context of Ogbu's (1992b) thesis to support our claims for systemic improvement in the education system. Further, my intentions are to write an open letter to education authorities, so our recommendations could be used to inform education policy.

The ontology and epistemology that informed this dissertation project are grounded in the areas of critical theory and cultural studies. Lincoln and Guba (2000) write that "methodology is inevitably interwoven and intertwined with and emerges from the nature of the discipline" (p. 164), theoretical constructs and the areas of study. My research methodology is developed within the critical theory and cultural studies paradigms. They have informed my theoretical framework and will guide my major data-gathering and data analyses, which will emerge from a qualitative methodology (Lincoln & Guba). I choose to engage in qualitative research for this dissertation research mindful that Denzin and Lincoln (2005) defined qualitative research as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world" (p. 3) of the phenomena under investigation. During this process the researcher variously transforms the participant's world into a series of "field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a, p. 3), memos, and self-reflective diary entries. The research methods are interviews, ethnography, autoethnography, and discussion group conversations. Autoethnography—the recording and interpretation of my cultural experiences or stories (Jones, 2005)—provides opportunities for my own reflections on my school experiences. Ethnography is a process-oriented inquiry that provides personally situated accounts of human lives, experiences and cultural representations for cultural analysis in order to foster a better understanding of the group (Tedlock, 2000).

Because of its community base emphasis and ethnographic and autoethnographic foci, qualitative research methodology is best suited for this project (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Tedlock, 2000). Using two or more interpretive research practices in research design has particular advantages. First, a multi-method approach makes the research more rigorous because different methods check for plausibility, authenticity, credibility, and relevance (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998 & 2000). Second, it helps make the research more holistic because different methods produce different types of data (Fine et al., Lather & Smithies, 1997). Such a research practice yields optimum results in racialized and minority communities because it gives voice to those who were silenced previously and tells the stories that are stored in "safe places" (Fine et al., Ladson-Billings, 2000). Fine et al. write that qualitative research methods acknowledge "up front" the researcher's role in the study. Thus I will research my role as an autoethnographer. This is important because the situated researcher "approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis)" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 18).

Data-Gathering Strategies

Introduction

My qualitative research design encompassed three data-gathering strategies. These were ethnographic interviews, a group dialogue/exchange session, and auto-ethnographic self-reflections. In my multi-method approach, the research participants included five families, each having youths who currently attend or who have just completed high school. The five families included three two-parent households and two single mothers. None of the parents indicated if any of their children self-identified as LBGTT and none of our conversations dealt with this gender/sex identity. Also as the Caribbean area includes ethnicities other than Black, I sought to include these other groups in my research. However, I was not successful in getting any Asian or South-Asian families for my research.

My interviews with the individuals lasted approximately one hour each. The group dialogue/exchange session lasted about one and one half hours. I proceeded systematically to interview the parents individually; next I interviewed the parents as a couple, where this was warranted. I then completed this portion of my data collection with a group dialogue/exchange session. My self-reflections were continually recorded in a journal during the data collection stage. My own thoughts continue to contribute to this research and will continue to do so until the final document is completed.

Interviews

Holstein and Gubrium (2003) assert that the interview is a site for constructing and authoring versions of data and hence knowledge through social interaction with active participants. They add that the whole process is a "reality-constructing contribution" of both the participants and the researcher who contributes to this reality by virtue of the type of questions that are asked, and the manner in which these are asked. Dunbar, Rodriguez, and Parker (2003) write that "the interview process and the interpretation of interview material must take into account how social and historical factors—especially those associated with race—mediate both the meanings of questions and the answers" (p. 132).

This statement and similar ones shared by Mertens (2003) are troubling especially since I will be conducting insider community research in a racialized community. These statements are problematic because they are based on the traditional standards where all belief systems of note reflect mainstream biases. However, Dunbar, Rodriguez, and Parker (2003) go on to cite examples where "interviews have emerged as one of the main ways of documenting the lived experiences undergirding critical race theory" (p. 135). As they note, many of these types of research processes have been used to build evidence for challenges to "racially biased policies and discriminatory practices" (p. 134). My research will seek descriptive data to build evidence to challenge school practices that disenfranchise Caribbean youth. As a member of the community whose children went through the present school system, I may be perceived as someone who is committed to community inquiry in this area. An emphatic interviewer may help to transcend the power relations that are at the core of schooling and Caribbean community relations. I may be able to impart the level of trust that encourages the interviewee to "open up" freely to provide the "the thick descriptions" that this research requires (Dunbar et al., p. 135). On the other hand, Dunbar et al. caution that because respondents may recognize subtleties and complexities, such as class and education that exists within racial and ethnic identities, they may provide superficial or standard responses to their inquirers or researchers. In previous research in the Caribbean community I, as an insider, have found my research participants to be very chastising and forthright. For example, I was treated with the opposite of what Dunbar et al. call the "trickster discourse" (a discourse that is meant to mislead or fool outsiders). My interviewees would usually take it for granted that I possessed certain cultural knowledge and stories. They took me to task or felt I was either naïve or a simpleton for asking superfluous or redundant questions. They often felt that anyone who claims to be part of the community should have answers to the questions I was asking (Walrond-Patterson, 1999).

Storytelling

Storytelling, for research purposes, is the act of providing personal narratives or personal accounts of experiences during the interview process. As Narayan and George (2003) suggest, sometimes this may be a difficult task as many see their daily lives as a series of mundane and repetitive occurrences. They state, "Personal narratives emerge within what is culturally 'storyworthy'" (p. 451). They add that the most authentic stories are those that are told for the first time within an environment where the storyteller is not aware of the presence of unfamiliar listeners. This suggests the importance of considering the power and the ethical practices of the interviewer. Narayan and George state, "All stories emerging from an interview will bear the mark of an interviewer's presence and the hierarchical dynamics of the interview situation" (p. 454). They also say that since the story is only part of the documentary, the researcher should engage interviewees in an interpretative process, "through asking for their opinions on the meaning and through dialogues exposing the interpretive biases of both the storytellers" (p. 458), and the researcher. Further, they stress the importance of reviewing the stories that have already been recorded because this helps the researcher to ask questions of these stories, and thus to be more self-conscious, introspective and engaging in subsequent interviews.

The Impact of Family Dynamics

I chose to do the individual interviews because it is particularly important that "participants tell their stories with minimal interruption" (Morse & Field, 1995, p. 90). I recall when I interviewed couples during my master's research, issues of power arose between husband and wife teams, and I questioned if my intervention to encourage a balanced perspective would bias the research (Walrond-Patterson, 1999). Family interviews may be problematic because of issues of power and family dynamics. As well, Tedlock (2000) writes that joint husband and wife conversations may see the man considering more centrally important topics and adopting the expository mode, while the woman considers peripheral topics and narrative mode. Nevertheless, these interviews are important as they may reveal areas of contestation, power relations, and other conflicts that individual interviews may not reveal.

Of course, individual interviews pose their own problems as Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2003) and Reinharz and Chase (2003) point out. In the article "Interviewing Men," Schwalbe and Wolkomer say that historically males were always set as the standard in any social science inquiry. With that myth dispelled and the desire to have multiple perspectives when research is carried out, there is now a need to pay close attention to the subjective positions that males bring to the interview. Schwalbe and Wolkomer suggest that those who conduct the interviews should be aware of the nuances related to "how men 'do gender,'" noting their "tendencies to exaggerate rationality, autonomy, and control as part of signifying a masculine self" (pp. 55–63). They say: "Working around these problems, and perhaps even turning them into useful data, requires seeing how they arise from men's efforts to signify, in culturally prescribed ways, a creditable masculine self" (p. 55). With this understanding, I paid particular attention to these idiosyncrasies and would usually paraphrase and ask for clarity during our conversations. For example, I recall using the probing technique: "When you say 'raising hell', what do you mean?" (Personal communicaton, July 2004), to get a better understanding of phraseology.

> *Lance: He was questioning whether the sages were right about the charms of solitude and that just stuck with me over the years. Every once in a while I would jump on a chair or a table and shout this poem off.*
>
> *[J: I wonder why, [smile on my face] do you have any idea why it stuck with you?]*

(Lance, Personal communicaton, July 2004)

During the focus group interview he mentioned this behaviour again when the group talked about the poems they learned at school.

Lance: Well a lot of times I find myself jumping on a chair or a table and reciting.

(Focus Group Discussion, October 2004)

Trying to make meaning of this action is very important. As my opening quote to this chapter suggests there is a need to probe, in an effort to understand, why this poem is memorable. Schwalbe and Wolkomer (2003) also suggested that men tend not to disclose their emotions. During my interviews with the men, laughter was the only expression of a deviation in emotion.

The females I interviewed showed more emotion, expressing more laughter and even crying on one occasion. This created occasions for candour, openness and sisterly bonding during our conversations (Reinharz & Chase, 2003). In their article "Interviewing Women," Reinharz and Chase write of the emergence of many issues during women's interviews. These include "reexperiencing the guilt and inadequacy" (p.

79) of raising children as single mothers, being "relatively soft-spoken" (p. 77), attributable to historical silencing, and a lack of understanding of "her place within her community and society" (p. 77). All these instances were experienced during my interviews with the female participants. I was able to hear "things they had never divulged to anyone … and I was for [at least] one of them a kind of private diary" (p. 77). For example the following certainly drives home this point.

> *Ursula: You know it is amazing, [pause] and this is something I have not admitted to anybody before. I was trained to shoot.*
>
> *J: Oh my God, in the high school!*
>
> *Ursula: In high school.*
>
> (Personal communicaton, June 2004)

Group Dialogue and Exchange Session

The group dialogue and exchange session was grounded in understandings of cultural studies and its approach to data collection. "At a methodological level . . . cultural studies sets great store on 'situating' particular objectives for analysis" (Frow & Morris, 2000, p. 317). Frow and Morris caution that if qualitative researchers are to get away from the objectified study of culture as was common with anthropologists, it is important that they ask the question: "At what level [does] the concept of culture [operate] . . . for cultural studies" (p. 317)? A consideration of culture is important because it brings to the forefront the roles class, gender, sexuality, race, level of education, ethnicity, cultural memory, and other factors play in situating the participants of a dialogue. Cultural studies is shaped by "diverse feminisms interacting with class-conscious ethnic and critical race studies with gay, lesbian and queer studies, with postcolonial and diasporic research and with indigenous peoples scholarship" (Frow & Morris, p. 317). Movements of people of Caribbean heritage (enforced during slavery, and more recently for economic betterment) provide them with intuition that is "the basis of a privileged standpoint from which certain useful and critical perceptions about the modern world become more likely" (Gilroy, 1993. p. 111). Gilroy (1993) continues that this "unusual perspective has been forged out of experiences of racial subordination" (p. 111), which occurred during slavery and is prevalent today. Another understanding of cultural studies that applies to my research is that "spatial and temporal framings of experience are equally important to contextual analysis, which seeks to grasp the complexity of the mundane processes, events, and occasions in which 'identities' are formed and transformed" (Frow & Morris, p. 318). Caribbean school experiences that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s were remembered during the interviews and the focus group conversations. Participants were also asked to report about their children's experiences in Edmonton's schools. One of the attributes of cultural studies methodology is that it allows for a multi-perspective approach to discourses on representation and practices that make up a way of life (Frow & Morris). Cultural studies researchers recognize that the "relationship between individuals and their contexts [is a key ontological and epistemological concern and therefore] is a central dynamic to be investigated" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 320). Epistemology is defined as the fundamental way of making sense of one's world, by drawing on a system of beliefs or established doctrines (Marshall, 1998). One classic example is drawn from the world of design where the axiom "form follows function" applies. Ontology suggests that "[a]ny way of understanding the world, or some part of it, must make assumptions . . . about what kinds of things do or can exist in that domain" (Marshall, 1998, p.465). In sociology, for example, some of things we consider are persons, institutions, documents, norms and practices. As researchers understand the complex ontological importance of these relationships, they act to structure their research methodology and knowledge production process because they are aware that relationships are open to different interpretations. Multiple research methods check and verify each other thus narrowing the ways the findings can be interpreted. These criteria make a case for my application of this method for my project.

Madriz (2000) writes that she places group inquiry in the realm of "collective testimonies and group resistance narratives" (p. 636). Within the Caribbean group, as Brathwaite (1996) and other researchers write, when we get together conversations usually settle around our children and how they are navigating the education system and their future prospects. This is informal discourse. My research in the Alberta context documented these feelings, these collective testimonies, and these group concerns, and it will be added to those that have been done in other regions. Freire (1993/2005) believes collective conscientiousness leads to collective reflection on and politicizing of issues. The research participants believed that they had important information to offer to the education discourse and some even thought that our group should not negate the importance of our discussions, but we should empower our community and its children to succeed.

Frow and Morris (2000) state that "special and temporal framings of experiences are … important to contextual analysis" (p. 318). Hence the artefacts (poems and Calypsos) were very useful and effective tools to trigger memories and extract the participants' histories. In addition, as the discipline of cultural studies seeks not to homogenize narratives (Frow & Morris), it was quite acceptable to incorporate several literary forms and genres for the group's narrative. Further to this, Frow and Morris write, "The mixing of discourses and genres in much work in cultural studies has to do with methodological impurity … [because] cultural studies conceives its object as being rational … rather than substantial" (p. 327), meaning that they form an important addition to the discussion.

Autoethnography

Tedlock (2000) states that the democratization of knowledge, the inclusion of other forms of knowledge, specifically the integration of race, class, culture, gender and sex beliefs and behaviours compel the inquirer to acknowledge his or her stance in the research process. Tedlock goes on to say that self-disclosure is even more important now because of the growing likelihood that the researcher is a member of the ethnographic group.

Being a member of the Caribbean-Albertan community and having two girls who were educated in Edmonton, I am considered an insider for this research project. Because of my "native" (Tedlock, 2000, p. 457) inquirer status, both in terms of group membership and interest in the topic under review, I have undertaken to conduct autoethnography as a component of my dissertation. Autoethnography is a process of inquiry where the researcher becomes the researched subject to record stories or narratives of lived experiences and where these stories or narratives may be expressed as language, speech and/or systems of discourse that mediate and define the very experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b). As an autoethnographer, I am defined as the cultural insider who brings to the project similar experiences to those of the research participants and who works together with them to produce knowledge (Tedlock). This role has its benefits and challenges. Benefits include easier access to the field, knowledge of the field and less predisposition to be prejudicial to the members in the field. According to Tedlock my insider status will allow me to "produce engaged writing centering on the ongoing dialectical political-personal relationship between self and other" (p. 467). Challenges included the perception that I, because of my native status, may be in a position to exploit the group. For example, Tedlock cites other researchers who used their identity status to gather group knowledge for what the group believed were mercenary uses. This is also similar to researchers who use their knowledge as a power tool when doing community research. Another challenge, as Tedlock noted, is to address any political or verbal encounters that occur as a result of conflicting conceptual interests and goals between all or any one of the research participants and me that arise during the research process.

Setting for the Research

The setting or site I chose for my research is Edmonton's Caribbean Canadian community. Fine et al., (2000), who researched disenfranchised subjects, describe the ideal site as one where:

(1) the participants have an opinion about the topic, which includes a subjective experience as well;
(2) demographic nuances among the participants provide distinct and multiple perspectives with enough shared experiences to establish coherence and difference;
(3) there is the possibility to obtain informed consent; and
(4) the site is accessible.

Sites such as the Caribbean Albertan community presented an added concern and responsibility. While I presented myself to the community as the researcher, there was also my concurrent identity: that of a community member. Nevertheless, my first commitment was always to tell the story as truthfully as I had observed it.

As an insider, I would like to think that I have sufficiently good access to my community. However, discussions around education may be problematic. Fontana and Frey (2000) write that survey researchers find it easier to obtain opinions about nuclear dumps than to get information about individuals' sexuality. In my case, while working as an insider in a small community, I may discover private matters that individuals may not wish to share with me, the community member. Gaining trust and respect is even more crucial for an insider than an outsider who comes to do research in the community, because after the research is over, I still have to live in the community and the community members still have to reside with me.

The Research Process

I undertook this study because I wished to explore what people of Caribbean heritage needed teachers, who educate their children, to know about what they (the parents) valued. Concurrently, I wanted to understand families' perceptions about how their world views, as presented by their children, are treated and assimilated, accommodated, or ignored in the school system. I also wanted to find out what formal education meant to these individuals. In other words, how did they perceive formal education, what are their expectations about formal education, and were these expectations met or are they being met? I was interested in determining the values these individuals placed on formal education, and what they did to manifest the level of value they placed on education.

For this research, I interviewed parents who were first generation Canadians of Caribbean heritage, since I was interested in having them reflect on and speak about the type of education they received in the Caribbean. In order to get a multiple perspective across levels of education, I endeavoured to find individuals who had different types of education. I had them address the degree of parental involvement that existed during their school experiences. I also wanted them to surmise how they would behave if they were educating their children in the Caribbean today.

To obtain a deeper meaning of their education experiences, in both the Caribbean and Edmonton, I asked the participants to prepare a reflective exercise for the group discussion. Each research participant was asked to reflect on their experiences and prepare a poem, a song, or a piece of literary work that they could use to express their thoughts on the research topic. Of course, this exercise was not limited to these three items. Research participants could have chosen to bring pictures, newspaper clippings, certificates, other published songs or any other artefact to the group session for the discussion. One research participant was not able to attend the group discussion while two others joined the group discussion later in the evening. I facilitated the group discussion where each person had the opportunity to share their poems or articles with the group and to talk about these items in an attempt to provide a deeper understanding of what education means to them. At the group discussion, I asked the first person on my right to introduce her article and to talk about it. She introduced her item and talked about why she felt it was relevant to her school experience. She then recited her poem. When she was finished we discussed her meanings and added our own opinions as well. As I was already familiar with what each group member had said, I was able to interject with my own questions when I felt the need to have the group's opinion about a concept that an individual had raised with me. Each other group member had the opportunity to add to the discussion once an individual was finished with his or her presentation. This discussion was intended to provide a very poignant educational moment because the exercise had the possibility of bringing out some of the culturally specific literary genres of speech that are not currently represented in formal education. Secondly, the dialogue provided an opportunity to produce and exchange cultural knowledge that would not have been obtained during the interviews.

Data Collection Process

Introduction

The data collecting process I undertook for this research consisted of four steps as outlined by Creswell (2002). These were:

(a) gaining permission to conduct the research in the community;
(b) establishing a group of research participants;
(c) determining the type of data to be collected, and
(d) collecting the data while adhering to an agreed research protocol.

The Participants

This process involved first, speaking to the well-recognized community leaders of organizations that provided extracurricular services, activities, or other services to the families and youths in Alberta's Caribbean community. These organizations are the Jamaica Association of Northern Alberta, the Honorary Counsels for Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, the Barbados Association of Alberta, the National Black Coalition of Canada – Edmonton, the Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage, the Black Achievements Awards, the Western Carnival Development Association and the Congress of Black Women of Canada – Edmonton Chapter. The groups' leaders identified family members of their organizations who fit the research criteria and provided me with the necessary contact information. I had no trouble getting five families to participate in the research, with only three refusals among the eight I contacted. Two of these families spoke to me about their challenges but were reluctant to have their problems recorded. I had preliminary phone conversations with the family's contact person to determine if they fit my research criteria. While all were born in the Caribbean and had some education there, two participants completed their education in England and three completed theirs in Canada. Of the three who finished their education in Canada, two of them did so as adults. All had an understanding of education in the Caribbean and the Alberta school system, and even those who completed their secondary education in their adopted country had been taught Caribbean principles by their parents. Appendices two, three, and four provide demographic information about the research participants.

The Characteristics of the Conversations

The data for this research were tape-recorded interviews, field notes, and text material. These included stories, songs, poems, my own diary reflections, and log records. I conversed with five parental groups, completing eight separate interviews, two couple interviews and one group conversational session. These conversations were held at locations convenient for the individuals, as my first goal was to find places that were non-threatening where they were comfortable and felt free to talk about their education experiences. Morse and Field (1995) advise that the researcher should let the participant choose the interview setting, but success is best when both the researcher and the participants can agree on a mutually beneficial site. The researcher's main concerns would be to find a quiet location with minimal distractions, and in many cases I was able to get such a site.

The conversations included a mixture of structured and unstructured interview questions (see Appendix 5 for a list of the sample questions). Fontana and Frey (2000) define the interview as a face-to-face conversation, characteristic of listening to, attending to, encouraging and observing the participant, while also paraphrasing, summarizing, clarifying, and facilitating reflection on any or all questions (Ivey, 1994; Morse & Field, 1995). I found these practices, which Ivey and Morse as well as Field recommend, to be extremely helpful in my interviews as they produced in-depth, exhaustive responses. I used the structured question requiring short answers to start the interview. These questions had "limited response categories" (Fontana & Frey, p. 649) and also functioned to put the research participant at ease before I began to ask the open-ended questions of the unstructured interview session. Fontana and Frey recommend unstructured interviewing because it provides "a greater breadth of data" (p. 652) than structured and group interviewing, as a result of its "qualitative nature" (p. 652).

Structured interviews seek precise information that can be coded "in order to explain behaviour within pre-established categories" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 653). An example of one of my structured questions was: "If I make the statement 'your school experience was enjoyable,' would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with that statement?" On the other hand, the unstructured interview "attempts to understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry" (Fontana & Frey, p. 653). One such question that sought an in-depth response was: "What does your Caribbean culture mean to you?" Further to this distinction, the writers contend that to some degree interviews, regardless of overall intent, will still have some structure. I found this to be the case especially as these questions applied to the location for the conversations or the setting, the choice of research participants, the questions asked, and even the sequence in which these questions were asked. For example, in the couple interviews, I found that the male usually would answer the question before the female participant and her retort would usually be a response to his, to either support or negate his statement. On the other hand, the group conversation was unstructured with everyone being free to control the direction of the conversation. I usually stayed out of the conversation and allowed the concepts to emerge. This approach allowed me to observe what the individual was willing to share with the group. For example, one participant shared with me what I felt was important information during our conversation. However during the group discussion, she never made this disclosure when the opportunity presented itself. I thought about asking her to share that information with the group, but I did not. This I felt gave me a very profound understanding of the dichotomous dynamics between individual and group conversations.

Conversing with the Group

In addition to interviews I facilitated one group session where the parents came together to exchange cultural knowledge about education and their experiences about their children's education. Patton (1990) defines a group interview as an interview with a group of about six to eight people, on a specific topic, lasting for about one and one half hours. Each member came to the session prepared to provide additional information about his or her educational experience. They were all told, at my previous meetings, that they could also reflect on our interview and if they remembered anything that could add to our dialogue they were welcome to bring this additional information to the group session. As I needed to include some depth to our conversation, I told each person to bring an article that was emblematic of their school experience in the Caribbean or elsewhere. It was my opinion that the articles would produce a richer text about their experiences. Madriz (2000) writes:

> The [discussion] … group is a collectivistic rather than an individualistic research method that focuses on the multivocality of participants' attitudes, experiences, and beliefs. (p. 836)

Madriz (2000) further believes that the group strategy for collecting information is even more important, because it emphasizes "the communal and collectivist nature of … [individuals'] lives" (p. 836). This theory reinforces the need for the group exchange as a methodological approach in my research, because not only does it bring together a marginalized group, but more importantly, it recognizes the range of diversity within the group. For example, there may be differences in education, gender, age, and values.

Contacting the Participants

After receiving the necessary approvals for conducting this research, I called members of the community to commence collecting the data. Morse and Field (1995) write:

> Two components of the research process complement each other to ensure that the finished product is excellent qualitative research. The first is the collection of adequate and appropriate data, and the second is creativity in data analysis. (p. 125)

Successful qualitative research entails first, collecting enough data to completely understand the phenomenon that is being investigated. Second, acquiring an understanding of the culture where the phenomenon occurs is important because eloquent description can be given of its norms and practices. Also, a critical understanding of this culture affords accurate synthesis of the data and allows the researcher to explain successfully any data variance. Third, "theorizing is the process of constructing alternative explanations and holding these against the data until the best fit that explains the data most simply is obtained" (Morse & Field, 1995, p. 128). Fourth, the data with its rich descriptions are re-contextualized to produce new theory that is "applicable to other settings and to other populations" (Morse & Field, p. 129).

A flowchart of the data collection stage, which I followed, is listed in Appendix 6. This process demonstrates that I transcribed each individual interview and completed a superficial analysis to detect any emerging themes or concepts that I could use to inform the content of my questions in subsequent interviews. This chart shows that I also transcribed my personal self-reflections as narratives of my own research journey. I completed all the individual interviews before I started the family group interviews. This ensured that I used themes and concepts that were discussed during the individual interview sessions to inform and double check some of my previous information. In turn, this knowledge also informed how I structured and conducted the focus group interview which was done after all individual and family interviews were completed.

Once I completed the interview, or as soon as it was possible after leaving the field, I made a duplicate copy of my field work. This tape was stored in a safe location as a back-up to the original and as a precaution should problems arise with the original tape during the transcribing process. I replayed the tape I recorded and made sense of any inaudible words, according to how I recalled hearing them during our conversations. I also reflected on the process, "the questions asked and the participants' responses" (Morse & Field, 1995, p. 130) and recorded my feelings and comments about the session. It was during one of these processes that I realized the dialogue's words were expressing personal feelings in poetic form. I listened to all my other tapes again to test my intuition and I realized if I punctuated my participants' words in unconventional ways (that is by strategically placing punctuation marks at places other than at the end of the thought), I would capture their voices and degrees of emotions, with poetry.

During the data collecting stage of the research, events occurred that allowed me, the passionate, insider researcher with a subjective position, to pause for serious self-reflection. For example, during and after my conversations, I had to reflect on my own subjectivity as a Black, middle-class female, who was conducting research in my own community. Growing up in Trinidad as a child, I was not aware of the role financial security and status played in an individual's ability to attend elementary and secondary school. Even my position here, in Canada, as someone who is able to return to full-time, post-secondary schooling at this time in my life, is an unusual occurrence for many people of Caribbean heritage. Ryen (2003) writes, "nonverbal communication is an often unarticulated obstacle to cross-cultural interaction" (p. 435). Cognisant of this and my status position, I had to ensure that the inherent power circumscribed with this subjective positioning did not influence my demeanour during our conversations. I also found that during our conversations, some of my research participants' conversational language was dialectically and idiomatically nuanced. My problem was not as Ryen writes, "that cross-cultural interviewing thus required that interviewers learn more than vocabulary and grammar" (p. 436). I understood what was being said during the conversation. However, when I transcribed the text I found that nuance was also an important feature of Caribbean dialect English that ought to be made explicit when I presented the data. During my conversations I found that we touched on very sensitive issues. The single women I interviewed shared with me those family dynamics that occur with raising boys who are the oldest child in the family. They were very emotional, and we even cried, when they disclosed that the boys took on the role of the masculine head of the household and disciplinarian for their sisters. As a recent single parent, I understood these emotional upheavals that some single parents experience.

I rely on Ellis and Berger's (2003) assertion that "many researchers, particularly feminist, have debunked the myth of value-free ... inquiry" (p. 469) believing instead that interviews are interpersonal processes where power and emotional relationships are mediated. Some of the issues of sharing that occur during these types of interviews known as collaborative interviews (Ellis & Berger) are dealt with through keeping a self-reflective journal. The items in this journal can range from "the researcher's positioning and experience with the subject at hand to reflections on the research process and the researcher's feelings about the subject being explored" (Ellis & Berger, p. 471). It is a practice I find extremely rewarding as it helps me to debrief at the time and review at other times to improve my interview skills.

The Diary or Logbook

Throughout the time I spent collecting the data I found it very helpful to maintain a journal or log book. Ely, Anzul, Friedman, and Garner (1991) define a log as an expansion of field notes that contain the information for initiating, carrying on and following up with the analysis. Transcripts of interviews were part of my log and, as I indicated, I used these opportunities to record any hunches I might have had. My hunches, plans, questions, doubts, apprehensions and ruminations were all part of the process and were documented in the log. Ely and associates suggest line numbering as an effective way to cross reference items once the analysis is begun and as a very effective way of citing material that is recorded in the log.

Presentation and Analysis of the Data: Attending to Cultural Relevancy

The next stage in qualitative inquiry is data analysis. Morse and Field (1995) say:

> Data analysis usually assumes two mechanical forms: (a) interparticipant analysis, or the comparison of transcripts from several participants, and (b) the analysis of categories, sorted by commonalities, consisting of segments of transcripts or notes compiled from transcripts of several participants. (p. 128)

This section is devoted to the necessary concerns, challenges and preoccupations inherent in documenting and analyzing culturally relevant data to establish its reliability and warrant the research's outcomes and conclusions. Attending to the cultural relevancy of the data brings to the forefront the awareness that language like knowledge is socially constructed (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In working with the data, the data's format and analysis should withstand critique and push the boundaries of "canonical tradition within the intellectual field" (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005, p. 822). In doing so, the research might have an opportunity to establish a place within the dominant discourse and hence contribute to knowledge-building (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

My objective to maintain the actual dialogue the research participants used during our conversations is supported by the desire to introduce other ways of seeing the world into the research discourse. AERA (American Educational Research Association) Draft Standards for Reporting on Research Methods (2006) is supportive of this objective. The report defines sources of evidence as referring "to both the phenomena under study and to the data or empirical materials that were gathered to provide evidence relevant to the research questions or problems" (p. 4). Among other standards for reporting of evidence, the document notes: "evidence that serves as a warrant for each claim should be presented. . . .Claims should be illustrated with concrete examples (e.g., field-note excerpts, interview quotes or narrative vignettes) ... Any speculation that goes beyond the available evidence should be clearly represented as such" (p. 11).

In reviewing the conversations, I was concerned with how to present my data so that the actual voices of my research participants were maintained, while at the same time retaining the necessary coherence so that this body of knowledge is presentable to audiences who are familiar with the Caribbean spoken word or dialect and those who are not. I was also concerned with how to analyse the data with regard to data gathering from different sources. I decided to do my own transcribing because, in previous instances, transcribers who for the most part were not from the Caribbean were challenged to understand what Caribbean people were saying. I found that I would spend as much time editing their reports as if I had done the initial transcribing myself. Thus, I was able to provide a verbatim transcription of our conversations and save some time in the process. As I did this transcription, I always reflected on the juxtaposition of representation and coherence in all its complexities. I knew what was being said, but I worried that my readers would dismiss the dialogue because it might appear incoherent to them. I also knew from reading other authors' writings on Caribbean research that dialogical representation was often problematic. For example the following is a representation of altered Trinidadian Creole dialect:

> The people will say: 'Well yes! Something is happening! This is looking good' (Bharath 1995) . . . in the last few years, with the publicity, with the Community [be]coming a little more outright, and [our] people getting support from different areas, people are hearing with the printed media and other forms of

> communication to the wider society, people are learning more about the community . . .. (Bharath, 1995 as cited in Forte, 2005, p. 14)

Sociolinguists and dialectologists support this approach to reporting discourse as these types of "informal conversations represent ideal data" (Rickford, 1991, p. 191). Rickford (1991) writes about issues of trustworthiness in reporting as follows:

> Both in North America and the Caribbean, such texts were typically set down in writing by outsiders and newcomers to the community, and they may fail to represent relevant phonological and grammatical features while including mishearings, misinterpretations and conventionalizations which are difficult for us to identify. (p. 192)

By immersing myself in the data I was able to discern creolised speech patterns (Morgan, 2002; Rickford, 1987; Winer, 1993) that are inherent to "Vernacular Black English" (Rickford, 1991). This was too pronounced to neglect, and it also addressed the tenets of representation and validity. Thus on the basis of this analysis, I represented the participants' speech genres in my document phonologically and grammatically intact.

Qualitative analysis deals with extracting themes from the data in the long process of eventually warranting outcomes and conclusions (AERA, 2006). I used software Nvivo® (Richards, 1999) as the tool to code the interviews, and my personal self-reflections and critical cultural analysis to interpret and make meaning of the coded information. Coding allows "the researcher to make judgments about the meanings of contiguous blocks of text" (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 769). Coding enables the investigator to sample, either randomly or purposively; to identify themes, to build codebooks, to mark texts, and to construct and test models (Ryan & Bernard).

Ryan and Bernard (2000) define themes "as abstract … constructs that investigators identify before, during and after data collection" (p. 780). There are several methods for discerning themes in the dialogue. Ryan and Bernard suggest the most common practice to identify themes is to go through the data line-by-line to detect "process, actions, assumptions, and consequences" (p. 780). Another method is to identify metaphors and words that are repeated throughout the text. Ryan and Bernard describe a third method:

> [It is] looking for evidence of social and cultural contradictions, informal methods of social control, things that people do in managing impersonal social relationships, methods by which people acquire and maintain achieved and ascribed. (p. 780)

In doing my analysis I combined oral narratives with text narratives and other cultural genres. The text and oral narratives contained idiomatic expressions that were found in Caribbean speech. These came from musical poetic genres, such as "dub" poetry or calypsos. This type of datum is common "to the ways of writing culture" (Denzin, 2000, p. 899). Denzin (2000) writes that in writing culture, writing genres are blurred and facts are treated as "social constructs, [reflecting] social life and the reports about it" (p. 899). Ely et al. (1991) write that "establish[ing] categories from qualitative data seems like simultaneous left-and right-brain exercises with one job of distilling the categories while maintaining the larger picture so that the categories are true to it" (p. 87).

Proceeding with my analyses, I marked up the text in the Nvivo® program, identifying lists of metaphors, similar items or different "items that belong in a cultural domain" (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 770). The calypso and political images providing "satirical narratives" were analyzed in conjunction with the text that the participants and I provided. This rigour allowed me to detect themes within that narrative that may have been mentioned in the research but were overlooked by the research participant. I arranged the words, sentences and phrases thematically and subsequently in a hierarchical tree structure, which allowed for detecting nuances even within themes so that the data could be further reduced to even simpler themes. This method is referred to as "building a codebook" (Ryan & Bernard, p. 781). Morse and Field (1995) say that themes are not always apparent at first glance, and it may be necessary to take a step back and ask the question "What is the respondent trying to say?" or "What is taking place in this interview?" Not surprising, during the course of the analysis, themes did emerge that encouraged me to ask more questions of the data so I could use these questions in my quest to formulate more poignant cultural knowledge and theories.

Writing up My Data

The writing format that I used to present my participants' voices is a free and open style that reflects my understanding of their speech patterns. I found that presenting their voices in prose format did not take into consideration the numerous pauses that would generally occur during a conversation. It also did not take into consideration the dialectical nuances, intonations or poetic format of Caribbean dialect speech. To present the research participants' voice in a prose format would take away the pattern of Caribbean speech. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) state, "Language is a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and of the Self" (p. 960). They continue:

> We are fortunate, now, to be working in a postmodernist climate, a time when a multitude of approaches to knowing and telling exist side by side. . . . A particular kind of postmodernist thinking that we have found to be especially helpful is post structuralism. Poststructuralism links language, subjectivity, social organization, and power. The centerpiece is language. Language does not 'reflect' social reality but rather produces meaning and creates social reality. Different languages and different discourses within a given language divide up the world and give it meaning in ways that are not reducible to one another. Language is how social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where one's sense of self—one's subjectivity—is constructed. Understanding language as competing discourses—competing ways of giving meaning and of organizing the world—makes language a site of exploration and struggle. (p. 961)

Vulliamy (2004) also writes about the need to have alternative approaches to presenting the research data. He states:

> The traditional qualitative/quantitative divide that used to reflect epistemological and ontological divisions was breaking down with the developments in computer modeling techniques. Alternative approaches to the computer-assisted analysis of qualitative data also highlight the manner in which it is now such deep-seated philosophical divisions—rather than the use of quantitative or qualitative data—

> which are the main divide for researchers. Thus, for example, ethnographers influenced by traditions such as poststructuralism, postmodernism, feminism and postcolonialism, that stress multi-perspectivism and the complex interrelationships between language, knowledge and power, have been critical of code and retrieval software packages and the grounded theory approach underpinning them (Coffey et al., 1996). Instead, they have experimented with the textual presentation of data through hypertext and hypermedia programmes, where the reader can choose different pathways through both selections of qualitative data, such as fieldnotes, documents or interview transcripts, and the author's discourse analysis of them. They argue that hypertext software helps to preserve the complexity and multi-meanings of social life by enabling a presentation of text that is non-sequential, unlike code and retrieval packages which privilege the sole linear account of the researcher. (p. 276)

I am suggesting that cultural knowledge of the data can produce similar analysis. Coding my research data allowed me to categorize my data, but at that point I felt that the coding also contributed to a superficial treatment and did not adequately deal with historically contextualizing the information. I felt that I needed to use critical discourse analysis at the intersections of education and culture to come to a deeper understanding of the text and to make meaning of my research participants' discourse. Critical discourse analysis focuses on theory formation across disciplines (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). This approach to critical discourse analysis is grounded in Foucault's work on discourse analysis, which views discourse as constituting society on various dimensions, and as constituting objects of knowledge, social subjects and forms of self in social relationships (Fairclough, 1992). Hence this approach has applicability to the research that was conducted for this dissertation as it brings together cultural studies and education.

As a researcher, I find that critical discourse is useful because it allows for the inclusion and analysis of discourses that are not in the dominant literature. Legitimizing the analysis of the spoken word allows the researcher to bring into the discourse genres that are not documented in formal texts. These texts are crucial to any discussion about the knowledge systems and educational philosophy of the group that is being investigated. Critical discourse analysis creates the space for the researcher to theorize about the contestation of power that exists at the confluence of the two competing educational discourses, namely, the dominant and the vernacular.

I use the term discourse to define the "extended samples of spoken dialogue [that] emphasises interactions between [the] speaker and addressee" (Fairclough. 1992, p. 3) in my research data. Van Dijk (1993) defines critical discourse analysis as a form of analysis which seeks to know "what structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events play a role in these modes of reproduction" (p. 250). In defining dominance "as the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups resulting in social, political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality, van Dijk states that critical discourse analysis focuses on the role of discourse that challenges the (re)production of dominance in discourse-power relations.

Critical discourse analysis at the intersection of cultural identity and education has the potential to reveal the configurative arrangements of power that exist between cultures (Locke, 2004). Moreover, it can also reveal how these cultural identities are represented and taken up both at the micro and macro levels in educational structures (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004; Locke). Further, this kind of analysis is important because, as Gaudio and Bialostok (2005) claim, today it is still politically safe to explain disparities in income and scholastic achievements in terms of ethnicity or culture. Subsequently, the two major concepts considered in this analysis are education and culture.

The critical discourse analysis of my research participants' conversations, the calypsos, and the political events, which were popular discourses during their educative experiences in the Caribbean, have contributed to the ways in which some of my research participants now construct education. The discourse theory about our education is grounded in the critical discourse analysis of our informal and formal education.

Figure 4 models how discourse theory contributes to the formulation of a grand theory about Caribbean education culture.

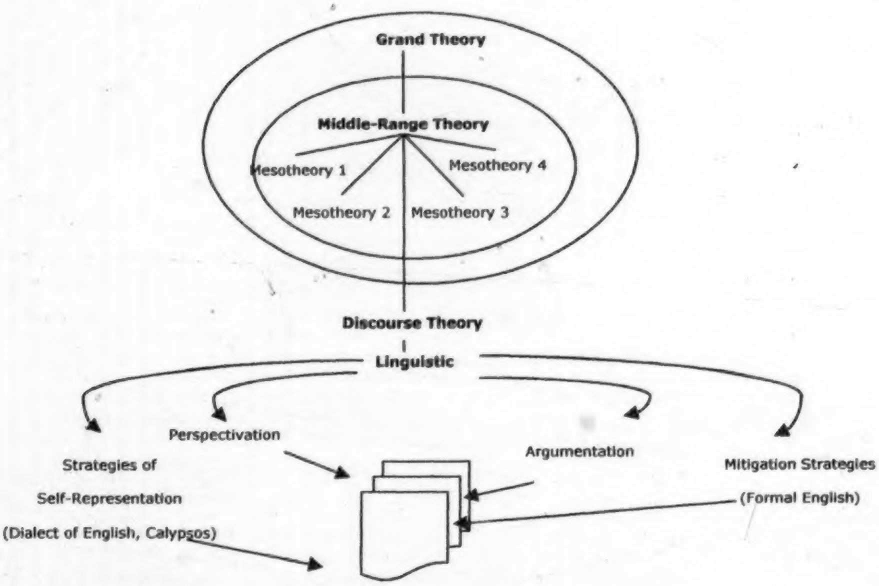
Grand Theory
Middle-Range Theory
Mesotheory 1
Mesotheory 2
Mesotheory 3
Mesotheory 4
Discourse Theory
Linguistic
Perspectivation
Argumentation
Strategies of
Self-Representation
(Dialect of English, Calypsos)
Mitigation Strategies
(Formal English)

Figure 4: Levels of Context (Weiss & Wodak, 2003, p. 23)

In my proposal I indicated that my discussions with my research participants would be centered on important material cultural artefacts that represented or were poignant reminders of their schooling. I also proposed using critical discourse analysis to analyze the text from my research. My encounter with found poetry—although surprising—was very enlightening as it revealed that I should revisit all my data and look at it with new lenses. My scripting of the narratives had been all wrong. My research participants were speaking in poetic style. I believe these "voices" now have contributed to a richer and even more compelling text. I did detect nuances which I previously overlooked. When they spoke about British particularities, the British diction was evident in their voices. However when they spoke about Caribbean concerns their voices revealed more Caribbean tones—rich and pronounced in the Caribbean dialect. I did not detect the rhythmic lilt of speech earlier because of my insider status. I was certainly astonished when I noticed this cadence. With the new understanding of the data I had the opportunity not only to conduct the intended critical discourse of the found poetry, but also to exemplify that the cultural nuances and speech patterns that the data revealed were an aspect of culture that must not be minimized.

"Writing culture," as termed by Denzin (2000) and others, gives me the opportunity to get to the nuances of the spoken word and allows me to go beyond what is said to get at its deeper meaning. Denzin writes, "Words and language have a material presence in the world—that words have effects on people" (p. 898). Having discovered the subtext within the narrative I am compelled to maintain the spoken word with little or no editing. Denzin (2000) writes:

> I imagine a world where race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation intersect; a world where language empowers and humans are free to become who they can be, free of prejudice, repression and discrimination. . . . Those who write culture must learn to use language in a way that brings people together. The goal is to create sacred, loving texts, which address a love for freedom and a concern for people and the lives they live. (p. 899)

He goes on to say that the socially and politically constructed genres of literature are just that: socially and politically constructed and are used to "police certain transgressive writing forms" (Denzin, 2000, p. 899). He continues:

> There is only narrative—that is, only different genre-defined ways of representing and writing about experiences and their multiple realities. The discourses of the postmodern world constantly intermingle literary, poetic, journalistic, fictional . . .

> factual, and ethnographic writing and representation. No form is privileged over others. Each simply performs a different function for a writer and an interpretive community. (p. 899)

In addition to capturing the voice of my research participants, I realized that their narratives were telling me other stories. As I analyzed my data using NUD*IST Version 6 software (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2004), emerging themes indicated that my research participants were identifying themselves as having cultural identities constructed from a multiplicity of cultures. For example, in one instance they were speaking standard English and in the next instance they would lapse into a vernacular English. In addition, during our discussions on numerous occasions they mentioned that their culture came in varying degrees from strains such as French, Spanish, African, English, East Indian, Aboriginal, and Chinese. As Pamela said:

> *The colonial period came,*
> *Because we had the waves:*
> *The Spaniards, the French, and what have you*
> *And that influenced us*
> *It had a lot of negatives*
> *But it also brought a lot of positives in the sense*
> *Well, because we learned from French, [and] Spanish, their culture [and] their food.*
> *It has become part of who we are.*
> *And the love of poetry and literature is part of our culture too.*

I just thought that sort of illustrated a little bit of what we did.

This is the voice of the colonized and the other "talking back" (hooks, 1989, p. 5), and it gives a clear indication that cultural transmission is multidirectional. Denzin (2005) writes that both quantitative and qualitative researchers have been guilty of researching the other in an "objective way" (p. 1) where "the observer went to a foreign setting to study the culture, customs, and habits of another human group" (p. 2). As Vidich and Lyman (2000) state:

> If, following the tenets of symbolic interactionism, we grant that the other can be understood only as part of a relationship with the self, we may suggest a different approach to ethnography and the use of qualitative methods, one that conceives the observer as possessing a self-identity that by definition is re-created in its relationship with the observed—the other, whether in another culture or that of the observer. (p. 38)

Thus when Pamela spoke about the French or Spanish she was also referring to the fact that many students also spoke a dialect or patois consisting of mixtures of French, Spanish, and English dialect. English, the language of official communication, was taught and this we learned. However, outside the classroom we could be ourselves and we spoke "broken English." We understood that we were to speak and write proper English in the classroom. Living in the linguistically dual world allowed us to construct two distinct but equally important discourses. The teachers adhered to the curriculum, so there was no evidence from my research participants that their teachers did anything differently. However, when I listened carefully to the conversations we had, I concluded that I could juxtapose my participants' poetic text and dialogue with the popular calypsos to which we were also exposed during our school days. This was also supported by Schultz's observation that "common sense thinking takes cognizance of the social cultural world" (as cited in Weiss & Wodak, 2003, p. 4). The expressions of my research participants also allowed me to include the "subjugated knowledge" (Foucault, 2001, p. 70) that had been missing from the dominant discourse of parent educational experience. Foucault defines subjugated knowledge as "those blocks of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism—which obviously draws upon scholarship—has been able to reveal" (p. 70). According to Foucault, this knowledge is "located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (p. 70), but the present criticism about its absence allows me to digress from my intended dissertation objective to ensure I rigorously analyze it and include it in the present discourse.

I will analyze the public cultural pedagogy to which we were exposed. For example, many students who were schooled in the Caribbean during the same time as my research participants and I would have studied this poem.

There was a Sage

There lived a sage in days of yore
And he a handsome pigtail wore,
But wondered much and sorrowed more
Because it hung behind him,
He mused upon this curious case

And swore he would change this pigtail's place,
And have it hanging at his face
Not dangling there behind him.

We learned that the sage wore a pigtail behind and this caused him great distress. Webster's New Collegiate dictionary describes a sage as a wise profound philosopher, a mature or venerable man of sound judgment. Yet, in this poem, he is pictured as someone who is contemplating the position of his pigtail and as someone who did not know what he should do if he wanted it to hang to the front. Accompanying this poem was the face characterizing a Chinese person. My impression upon reading this poem is of someone who sat around and did nothing else but "wondered much and sorrowed more because it hung behind him." One is left to question why such a wise man would have such an unsolvable problem and to question if his ethnicity contributed to his predicament and in fact his stupidity or perhaps his depression.

Ethical Considerations

Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to research the education experiences of Caribbean heritage participants to determine the meanings they held and valued. Since every human experience is considered as being relative, the research's integrity was maintained by communicating "the deep and rich meaning that each participant has expressed" (Sandelowski, 1986, p. 29).

Fairness and Authenticity

Lincoln and Guba (2000) say that the hallmark of rigour is "fairness, ontological authenticity, educated authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity" (p. 180). Fairness, including all "perspectives, claims, concerns and voice [implies] … a quality of balance" (p. 180). Lincoln and Guba state that ontological and educative authenticity, like catalytic and tactical authenticity imply the duty of care and a duty to raise the level of awareness and critical consciousness of the research participants. The stories parents present are their reflections on their own school experiences and their understandings of their children's school experiences. I have followed Dei's (2008) challenge to enter my dissertation enquiry "humbled in [my claim] to know" (p. 2). He claims that: with such humility we can only hope to leave the classroom space (in this case, the research site) knowing more" (p. 2). He cites Walter Rodney to contend "that the colonized must build themselves up intellectually and emotionally, developing her commitment to study, critical scholarship and take whatever she does seriously" (p. 4). The critical personal narratives presented are layered accounts of past incidences. Denzin (2005) defines critical personal narratives as "counternarratives, testimonies, autoethnographies, performance texts, stories, and accounts that disrupt and disturb discourse by exposing the complexities and contradictions that exist under official history … and [are] central genres of contemporary decolonizing writing" (p. 946). I have tried in this presentation to be fair and authentic to my views and those of my participants as I adhere to the tenets of qualitative research. Any variation from this protocol was not intentional.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the assurance that the research was carried out fairly and the information produced closely represents the group's experience. I achieved this with my research methods and subsequent analysis. Ely et al. (1991) state that credibility is characterized by prolonged field engagement, multiple research methods, identifying negative scenarios, referential adequacy, peer debriefing, participant review of the data for interpretation, clarity, and random colleague review of the process. Many community members trust me to discuss their education experiences. Those who did volunteer to be participants believed their children were successful and were willing to discuss their strategies for success with me. On the other hand, those who were not satisfied with their children's outcomes spoke off the record, but declined participation in the project. Ethical considerations suggest that this reluctance must be respected and I obliged.

Objectivity

Ely and associates (1991) write that ethnographic research methods can never be objective as the researcher is never "judgment-free" (p. 53). Hence the researcher should work towards a version that is not skewed by his or her subjective position. Ely et al. say that the researcher must constantly educate himself or herself to this practice. They also recommend the use of the logbook to record research experiences, which will help to deal with the challenges imposed by subjective positions. Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated my position. I have referred to my parents, my siblings, and my children as

I constructed my own stories. No doubt all who read this dissertation will be aware of my subjective position. My advantaged position allowed me to bring to this project prior knowledge, which contributed to my in-depth analysis. Other neophytes to the Caribbean community may have had to spend time getting to know the community and gaining their trust before they would have been able to retrieve such information.

Leaving the Field

Finally, I left the field when I had sufficient information to represent the participants' views accurately. At that time I did not have too many unanswered questions. Although I was not able to include all the data I obtained, what I did include was sufficient to present an accurate picture of the community's sentiments with regards to the education project I undertook.

Conclusion

After a discussion of my reasons for doing this research, a comprehensive review of the literature and my approach to data collection and analysis, I proceeded to the next chapters of this dissertation. In the following chapters, I have divided the data into three distinct sections. The first section, Chapter Four, expresses our understandings of our Caribbean education. Chapter Five is next and provides a contextual analysis, with reference to the time we were educated and the place in the Caribbean where this education took place. Chapter Six moves the education landscape to Edmonton. Here a review from the parents' perspective is provided. Chapter Seven brings all my findings together, to highlight the dissertation's major themes. Finally, in Chapter Eight, I write the letter to education administrators where I state the dissertation's vexing issues and highlight those aspects of education which these individuals of Caribbean heritage believes have worked.

CHAPTER FOUR: (RE)LIVING OUR EDUCATION

General Information about my Research Participants

My research project investigated Caribbean Canadian parents to determine their views on education in the Caribbean and Edmonton. Eight people agreed to be research participants for this project. They consisted of three two-parent families and two single mothers. I used pseudonyms for the parents and any places they identified in Edmonton. I have not identified any of the post-secondary institutions that the children of my research participants are attending for fear that they may be identified through this information. I interviewed both the father and mother of the two-parent families. The other two families were led by mothers. One single mother was a recent divorcee, but her former husband is still involved in the children's lives. The other single mother is raising her children without a partner. I met the two single mothers through a community organization that operates a Saturday school program for children in the community. Four of the parents I interviewed felt that their children had succeeded in the school system. Frank and Monica have two girls who have both completed high school and are now attending post-secondary institutions. Errol and Pamela's two girls were attending university. Lance and Rosemary's boy was just about to enter a post-secondary institution on a sports scholarship while their daughter, who had been out of school for one year, was planning to return. Of the two families parented by single mothers, Ursula's son was about to start university while her two other girls were still in high school. Alice's son had completed high school and was not pursuing any post-secondary schooling. Her two other girls were still in elementary school. Alice had limited Caribbean schooling, having left Trinidad at age seven. She received the majority of her schooling in Canada.

I recognize that this analysis may represent success stories, but I did seek to include others whose children were not attending either college or university. However, they all declined to be part of my research. As I have chosen to do my own self-analysis, I will add here that my two daughters have completed university and are both in professional occupations. One is a teacher and the other is a graduate nurse and realtor. Although, for the most part, my research participants felt that they had successfully navigated the Canadian K–12 educational system, they all indicated that getting what they perceived was a quality education for their children was a constant struggle which included a constant vigilant overseeing of the system. As I proceed with my findings and discussion, I will unpack the discourse to point out what we see as salient to the education that our children receive. The following excerpt from a conversation with Alice is just one example of the feelings that my research participants presented during my conversations with them.

> *Well I would say in order for our children*
>
> *To have*
>
> *To share some of the experiences*
>
> *We have had*
>
> *We will have to find a way to incorporate*
>
> *In the school system*
>
> *Some of the structures that we had*

That is not really clear

But

What I am saying is

That there has to be some recognition

That in some way

We need to have adult input so that the children

Can see themselves reflected

In [the curricula]

That their behaviours are okay

Their ways of doing things are okay

Their expressions are okay

That they have role models

And that there are goals that they can aspire to [achieve]

And

Even though it may not always coincide with

What the dominant culture says

But

It is important that

It is recognized

And

So the school system has to incorporate

The best of our West Indian cultures

In their programming

And

It has to be on a regular, ongoing basis

And

I think that it should be mandatory

For teachers to have cross-cultural training

(Alice, *personal communication, July 20, 2004)*

Education in the Caribbean Context as We Remember It

Caribbean School Culture

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore stories about education that were provided by eight research participants who identified themselves as being from the Caribbean and who had various years of schooling in their country of origin. Pertinent to these stories is a comparative analysis that shows how individuals had access to education based on era, economics, gender, class, and other demographic factors. Education as political action and power is also apparent in Caribbean school culture.

Often, Blacks from the Caribbean find themselves having to defend the position that we are concerned about education. We also are concerned about the unnecessary testing, assessing, and labelling that our children experience in the education system (James & Brathwaite, 1996). When we arrive at the doors of Canadian educational institutions, the usual presumptions are that we have little concept of education systems, Canadian or otherwise, and that our children, for all intents and purposes, ought to be brought to the cultural competency levels of the average Canadian child. Rothstein (1996) writes:

> The family's history, attitudes, religion, class, and worldview are given to children over a period of many years, affecting the way they respond to their works both in and outside the home. Research has shown that schooling, as one example, is most effective when parents support the goals of educational institutions. Conversely, it is least effective when there is a conflict between the school's language and culture and those of the parents and students it serves. (p. 141)

Rothstein's research shows that conflicts do occur in organizational settings because of the diverse interests at play; in most cases, students with different cultural backgrounds may not have their values recognized, encouraged, or developed in the classroom.

To explain this, Apple (1995) states that structural actions that do not recognize the culture of others are deliberately supportive of the dominant ideology.

> For just as the everyday discourse and patterns of interaction in the family and in, say, the media are increasingly being subtly transformed by the logic and contradictions of dominant ideologies, so too is the school a site where these subtle ideological transformations occur. (p. 130)

Apple asserts that these transformations occur through the instrument of standardized prescribed curricula. Similarly, Freire (1993/2005) believes that these transformations are accomplished through the banking concept of education which is a process whereby students learn by rote memorization of facts. In many cases, we find this education inadequate, as many of our children leave school functioning at a level that meets the needs of the lower employment end of the marketplace (Apple, 1995, 2004; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; James & Brathwaite, 1996; McLaren, 2003). With education reducing us to a lower socio-cultural status, we are usually destined for low status jobs or we aspire to those jobs that are deemed "Black" profiled. This profiling occurs, for example, in directing Black students to sports, particularly basketball, football and baseball (James, 2005). It also occurs when Black students are encouraged to aspire to careers in the entertainment industry, which can be quite lucrative, but not a realistic goal for everyone. Researchers have begun to question these apparent benevolent practices, which ultimately do not lead to individual self-actualization.

From these culture-and-power perspectives, I wanted to do a comparative assessment between education in the Caribbean and in Canada. I began by consulting with the parents in this research project to ascertain their educational experience in the Caribbean as a basis for understanding how they valued education. I needed to get from them their sense of education as they had experienced it in the Caribbean. To do so, I asked them about their Caribbean school culture and their Caribbean culture in general. Interwoven throughout their responses to both these queries were recurring themes, which I will explore in this chapter. Before I get to this, however, I will describe the state of schooling that my research participants and I generally experienced in the Caribbean in the 1960s and 1970s.

Educational Structure in the Caribbean

When many of my research participants and I attended school in the Caribbean, the educational structure was modeled after the British system. Most children started school by attending kindergarten at about age five. Although the system varied slightly from one country to another, the basic structure was very similar to the one Miller (1976) describes of the Jamaican school system, which consisted of four stages. These were "early childhood, primary, secondary and further" (p. 49). This structure was also defined by most of the research participants. One research participant, Errol, describes a schooling stream that went to Standard 6B and 6A where students wrote an island-wide School Leaving Certificate exam at about ages 15 to 17 (Miller, 1976). Those who qualified had the option to attend teacher training college, technical college, or theological college. Students who passed the Common Entrance Exam at age 12 went on to grammar school and, with a successful completion of it in Form 6, could consider pursuing a university degree (Miller, 1976). Although Miller writes about this in the Jamaican experience, the system was quite similar in the other Caribbean islands.

In most cases, we started formal primary school at age six. Formal primary school was sub-divided into three sectors. Class designation for the first division varied, depending on the island or region where one went to school. It may be classified as primary one, second stage, and third stage. Others recalled that they were classified as little ABC (Kindergarten) and big ABC (Grade 1).

The next division started at Standard 1 and continued to Standard 5. In Standard 5 all children were eligible to write the Exhibition Examination, which was later termed the

Eleven Plus exam. Those who passed were eligible to attend high school, which started at Form 1 and continued to Form 5 where students wrote the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level Exam. Those who were successful at that level went on to Lower Six and Upper Six and wrote the GCE Advance Level, and thus completed schooling. Errol's description of schools in the Caribbean is fairly accurate.

Oh yes

Well in the Caribbean we go from Standard One to Class Six

And

When you get to Class Six it allows you to do an exam

And

When you pass it then you can go on to teaching

It allows you to be a teacher

So you reach to Class Six

They allow [you to write the exam]

And

Then they accept you into Teacher Training College

And

Then you go through one, two, or three and then you go ahead

But when I reached [Form] Five at a secondary College in Georgetown

I went to Bishops College to do [the] advance [level Certificate exam]

(Errol, personal communication, June 30, 2004)

Students who were not successful with the exhibition exam in Standard Five went on to Standard Six and Standard Seven, at which time they would write the School Leaving exam at about age 14, and at that time be eligible to leave school. Thus one could potentially leave school at age 14 with a School Leaving Certificate, which would be the lowest level credential with which one would want to leave school. At this stage females would probably attend beautician or secretarial schools to get those skills, while males would learn a trade. In other schools, these skills were included in the school system. One of my research participants comments on his school experience which supports this claim. These courses were no doubt offered to fulfill the technical skills that were needed for the development of the communities. Errol recollects the following:

In the beginning
It was my brother
My younger brother
He was in charge of the woodworking
He worked for the government
He was in charge of teaching teachers to do woodwork around the island
That was his job
He was in charge of everything
So he would travel from one school to the next school
All over the place and teach these guys
And then he would come down on Saturdays
And show them what to do

He was in charge of all of them

He worked with that

Because in those schools they teach you to do woodworking

So even though you do not get a good education

At least you know how to use a plane, and hammer to make furniture

And those kinds of things

And so forth

So we do that

It was for everybody

But you know,

Some people took that on

And so forth

So he would do that

And there was a lady

Who was in charge of the high-school in town

She was the principal of the girl's high school

Because the girl's high school and the boy's high-school

Those were the two best schools in the whole island

And you have two [schools]

Most people

Would. . .

Would have passed an entrance exam

And

If you got a junior scholarship

And you passed

You got in

And so forth

Right

(Errol, personal communication, June 30, 2004)

In this account I detected a hesitation at the phrase: "Most people, would, . . . would have passed an entrance exam." This hesitation points out his understanding that not everyone who went to those two schools would have passed the entrance exam. As many West Indian education historians and theorists point out, a percentage of places in the elite schools were left for those with more social and cultural capital than others (James, 1963/1983; Miller, 1976; Williams, 1962). Hence they did not have to go through the rigorous selection process Errol would have had to go through.

Our Elementary School Experience in the Caribbean

My Familial Kindergarten School Experience

I started schooling in the Caribbean at Mrs. Thomas' Kindergarten at age four. My brother, who was five years old, was attending Mrs. Thomas' Kindergarten and I, wishing to join him, asked my mother if I could go with him. Although it was a very informal setting, under Mrs. Thomas' house in rows of benches and tables, she was very serious about her work, which was to ensure that we knew our ABCs, could recognize our numbers, and knew how to write well on our slates with slate pencils. We learned other things as well. For example, we learned punctuality, proper classroom behaviour, nursery rhymes, and proper mannerisms, including table manners, discipline, and cleanliness. We found out later that this training was very important, because once we started formal schooling, we were expected to have all these skills from the first day.

My Research Participants' Kindergarten School Experience

Children rarely attended Kindergarten in the Caribbean because many middle income mothers stayed at home; a member of the extended family cared for the children if the mother worked (Chamberlain, 2006). Many research participants did not mention it, but the two who did had fond memories of this experience. Alice provides this account:

> *What I remember of Trinidad was*
> *That preschool was interesting*
> *I can't remember too far back in preschool*
> *Other than the first two years*
> *We call it elementary [school]*
> *That was quite nice*
> *Wearing the uniform and everything*
> *That was good*

(Personal communication, July 20, 2004)

Ursula had the following to say about her Kindergarten experience when we spoke:

Oh yes, there was a Kindergarten

And that was a lot of fun actually

Because you did lots of field trips

So that was really good

There was no spanking in that one

And I think there were only about two teachers and twenty kids

(Personal communication, July 16, 2004)

Familial Formal Elementary School Experience

Discipline.

My formal education in Trinidad and Tobago was at Point Fortin Roman Catholic School. As the name suggests, we practised the Catholic faith there, and religious instructions were an important part of our education. I followed my older brother everywhere. When he started school he skipped the first grade, and I went into first grade. One of my distinct memories of those early primary school days was Mr. Sebastian, the school master, spanking my brother because we were late for school one day. I felt bad because it was my fault we were late, and no amount of rationalizing on my brother's part with the schoolmaster mattered. As far as he was concerned, my brother Bunny was older. Hence he was responsible for our punctuality. This was not the only time Bunny had to visit the schoolmaster's office. I also remember my dad having to go to the school to speak with the schoolmaster because daddy felt that he was too heavy handed with my brother.

Regime.

Twice a day, on arrival at school in the morning and again after lunch, we lined up for formal inspection. The mornings were comfortable as the sun was not at its full intensity. However, after lunch, as we stood in the hot midday sun, usually perspiring from running around, it was a torturous exercise. I often wondered about its effectiveness. During those regimented occasions our uniforms were checked to ensure all the pleats were in place, our fingernails were clean, our hair was well combed and brushed, and our shoes were shiny or clean if they were white. Prefects inspected us. Of course, in the first three primary grades there were no prefects and our teacher did this. She had a switch (a rod) and any one who was not standing perfectly at ease or attention, when required, or who fell short on the other requirements was reminded to behave and received several lashes with the switch.

Spanking played a major role in our collective Caribbean school experience. Some teachers were known to be strict disciplinarians, and these included females as well. Miss Assay, who taught Standard 1, was such a teacher and it seemed she spanked students for almost anything and everything. I especially remember her making us do things over if they did not meet with her expectations of us. I recall her refusing to mark my exercise book and demanding that I do it over before she would mark it, because she felt my work could be neater. She was also my first sewing teacher, and was especially demanding regarding my sewing samples. The stitches had to be perfect and neat. Many of my classmates who did not obey her were spanked.

Alice's experiences were similar to mine. In describing what she remembers of her early school experiences, Alice, who experienced schooling both in the Caribbean and Canada, compares the discipline of both these systems as follows:

> *The principal and the teachers had more influence on the children*
>
> *There was more discipline, punctuality*
>
> *The hours of schooling wasn't as long*
>
> *And*
>
> *Well elementary is a little bit different here than it is at home*
>
> *One thing I remember*
>
> *Man, if you misbehaved the principal had options of spanking you or giving you licks on your hand*
>
> *Or something like that*
>
> . . ..
>
> *The schooling in Canada*
>
> *It was not the same because they were not allowed*
>
> *To, well they call it corporal punishment*
>
> *They don't have that.*
>
> *So you were not allowed to spank.*
>
> (Personal communication, July 20, 2004)

Although Ursula says that she was a good student, she also recalls the spanking culture of elementary schooling, making it a fearful place for her. As you will see, I was astonished at her reaction to the spanking system. Thus I pressed her further to tell me more about this experience.

[Okay. Please describe your Caribbean school experience]

Ursula provides this response to my inquiry:

I would say that for elementary I found it was really, really tough.

I don't like to remember that part too much.

[She laughs]

[Is that right, why?]

And the reason for it is

The spanking

[We laugh]

[Oh the spanking, oh my goodness]

. . .

[She laughs]

[So why did you get spanked in elementary school?]

We got spanked for everything

I chatted a lot and I still do

And I got spanked for that

You get

In spelling you get one [answer] wrong

You got spanked for that

It was

Then we had disciplining

Yes we lined up for everything

Even to get the strap

She claps both hands, making a strapping sound. She laughs and continues.

Actually, only the other day

I was telling my kids that

There was one day

I think it was spelling

And I got one word wrong

And it was

Like

Because I was a very good [academic] student

So I did not get the strap a lot

And that day I just thought

. . .

And I jumped out [of the class]

I think I was in the balcony

On the lower level

And when it was my turn

I jumped out of the classroom

Because I thought

This was enough

I was not going to get hit for one wrong spelling mistake

And I am getting out of here

[You seem to remember it, did this traumatize you? It seems as though it traumatized you.]

She responded:

I don't think it traumatized me.

It is just that

When I think in retrospect

Well

I can't think

That this actually happened

[So your elementary school was just strict with lots of discipline?]

It was a lot of discipline and not ... in terms of doing good

[Who was responsible for discipline?]

Everybody was

The teachers

If you went way overboard

Then you got to go to the principal

And it wasn't anything specific

It was a ruler

Some teachers had a belt

Some a stick

It wasn't anything specific

In terms of what they used

But in spite of all of this, I don't feel traumatized by it

But I know from then

You almost had the feeling

That, that's not the way you want to raise your kids

[She laughs]

Because

There must be other things that worked

Even when we moved on to another topic, Ursula still related it to discipline and with references to spanking. Despite her belief that she was not traumatized, her actual language seems to tell a different story.

[Did you go to any private schools, kindergarten?]

Oh yes

There was a kindergarten

And that was a lot of fun

Actually

Because you did lots of field trips

So that was really good

There was no spanking in that one

[Laughter]

I felt she spoke more forcefully about the spanking experience. Still concerned, I asked her if she remembered the name of the school she attended. She then said that she attended Samaritan Presbyterian School, a Canadian Mission-run school.

You may think that with this strict regime the students were spanked often, but that was not the case for those of us who understood the drill and conformed quickly. In retrospect, I believe that this strict discipline was important because our classes were quite full. And it was felt that the teacher perhaps needed this in order to teach effectively. So by the time we marched into the classroom we were quiet, took our seats in neat rows, and the teacher was ready to teach all 40 of us.

Religiosity.

My first stage teacher, Miss Yule, influenced me very much. She helped me to adjust to my first year of formal schooling, and she played a very big role in my religiosity. She taught me at Sunday school, which we attended from two to four o'clock. She prepared me for my First Holy Communion, which I took at age seven. She was the one who organized the "Children of Mary" group, which my sister and I attended after our First Holy Communion. This was a very pious organization, and we were the ones that the school turned to for its major and focal presentations at harvest festivals, the school's Christmas concert, and major feast days. For example, I always remember fondly the Corpus Christi processions where the "Children of Mary" would have to throw petals at the Blessed Sacrament as the priest carried it through the Main streets of Point Fortin. In addition, as Children of Mary, we went to church every first Saturday of the month. In overseeing these events, Miss Yule was very instrumental in developing my spiritual, moral, and ethical values. She was also one of those strong women in my life who, in her own way, encouraged me to volunteer to help the community and to perform on stage at public events.

Familial Expectation and Education

In our schools, if you did exceptionally well you skipped a grade or standard; if you failed you had to repeat the grade. Daddy had high expectations for my brother Bunny, so he was always taking private lessons after school and on Saturdays to ensure he did well. When Daddy was still not satisfied with Bunny's progress at Point Fortin R.C. School, he took action and sent my brother to another school. After doing his research he decided that school would be La Brae E. C. (English Catholic), which was noted for getting many national examination passes. Barakett and Cleghorn (2000) write:

> When there is a shortage of spaces at the next level of schooling, one often finds a national system deemed to be objective, that allows the system to select the number of students for whom there are spaces at the next level. (p. 14)

Mr. Jules and Miss Bethel taught the preparatory class for the national examination. They gave the students extra lessons before and after school during the week and on Saturdays. If Bunny were to be admitted to the class, he would have to get to school early and get back home late at night. Daddy would have to see that he got to school on time.

As we lived about 60 minutes by car away from that school, it meant that we had to spend a lot of time travelling to and from school. In retrospect, it was only that far because of the poor, winding roads and the low speed limits. Bunny and Mothsie would be up at 5:00 a.m. She would prepare his hot lunch, pack it in a food carrier, and get him ready for the taxi cab that picked him up at 6:00 a.m. to take him to school for 7:00 a.m. on weekdays.

I will credit my dad with this other fact, which helped me to understand the sense of community that has permeated my family. In retrospect, as I will write about later, this also demonstrated the linkages my own family made with education, social class, and development. Daddy talked a few of Bunny's friends' parents into allowing their children to go with him to La Brae E.C. Mr. Jules and Miss Bethel really coached those boys into shape. What I remembered was the boys worked as a very well oiled intra- and inter-competitive team, and they all did well.

Through all this, Bunny skipped grades twice, and this was very hard for him as his peers teased him because he was much younger than they were. I guess getting his close friends to go to school with him was one way Daddy tried to ensure that Bunny did not get picked on at this new school. Because of all this sacrifice, and in spite of what I thought was a lot of pressure to succeed, my brother did well at school: he passed the Island exhibition at age 10 with very good scores and was thus entitled to go to the best Catholic high school in Trinidad and Tobago, St. Mary's College in Port-of-Spain, which is the capital city of Trinidad. Daddy was very proud of this achievement, although it meant that Bunny would have to leave our home in Point Fortin and go to live with our very strict uncle who lived closer to the city. I was not happy to see Bunny leave home, but I understood it was for his betterment. I was even more sad when Bunny took his Raleigh bike with him. Daddy had given him the bike to acknowledge his scholastic achievements.

My dad did not pay the same attention to my education, although I was more conscientious than my other siblings. I did not do as well as Bunny, and this was perhaps because I was not coached as much as he was. I did not have as much extra schooling as Bunny. I was a fair student and quite disciplined. I also passed the Common Entrance exam to go to a good high school and got the coveted bike for my achievement. Those were my wonderful memories of my elementary school experience, and it was these kinds of stories I expected from my research participants' narratives. Although at the time I felt very fortunate and happy to have been less pressured, I now believe that my love of books and my ability to solve mathematical problems were not nurtured. As I recall, I took the initiative to join our public library; I was the only one in the family who was a member. It now seems strange to me that Daddy should spend so much time controlling Bunny's playful behaviour, and very little fostering my initiatives. As we continued through high school, I proved to be a better scholar than my brother. This was eventually recognized by my dad.

Education and Social Class

When I interviewed Rosemary I learned how different education could be from one part of the Caribbean to another based on the social class status, which reflected financial circumstances. Rosemary told me that, although she enjoyed going to school, her high school experience came to an abrupt end at age 11, just as she was about to settle into her studies at high school. She sat the common entrance exam just as my brother and I did. And, just as we did, she earned a place at the very prestigious St. Joseph's Convent in Tobago. As she did not pass with very high marks, she did not gain a full scholarship as we did, so her parents had to pay a portion of the fees. Unfortunately, they could not afford to do this, so she was only allowed to attend the school until the money ran out. While Rosemary had Caribbean schooling to age 15, most of it was spent at the elementary school level where she would take the school-leaving exam at age 15 and thus be officially entitled to leave school. She says:

> *[In] the Caribbean [it] was up to age14 and 15 [that I went to school]*
> *That's when you would do your school leaving [exam]*
> *Whatever age you get to at that point [when you are in Standard six]*
> *But then I went to high school, but*
> *Never completed that because of finances,*
> *I was not able to complete the high school part of it [my education]*
> *So there was a big break there [in my schooling]*

This dialogue gave me an opportunity to understand more fully the various ways schooling was conducted. Without the finances to go to high school, and with no legitimate place in the elementary school, the system left her parents to make alternate schooling arrangements. There were some private secondary schools but students still paid to attend these. Both the quality and quantity of their teaching resources were lower than those of schools like St. Joseph's Convent.

After hearing that she did not have an opportunity to complete her high school at St Joseph's Convent, I inquired as to whether she had any opportunity to go back to school. She then shared this experience:

What I did
Was
I went back to the elementary [school]
Rather than stay at home and run around and get into trouble with friends
I went back to elementary
And just being in elementary [school]
[I] just stayed in the highest, the last grade, which was grade seven
[I] just stayed there
Just stayed
And
Stayed there
Just to be in school then
And
Then
I did my school leaving exams

As I reflect on this poetic lament I get the impression that Rosemary was very frustrated with her situation of not being able to complete high school with her peers. The ending is almost a sigh that it was finally over. It must have been a painful exercise to be there with students who were much younger or were not successful at passing the national exams as she was. This, however, exemplifies the value and importance some people in the Caribbean place on education. As you see in the following paragraph, her narrative states that the teacher sought her out and invited her to come back to the elementary school just so that she could participate in the education that was taking place there.

I had a teacher who came home
And got us out of the house
And brought us back [to school]
She came home
And said
"You come back to school"
Because as I said
I was at the age of eleven [when] I went to this high school
And then
Because
Like I said
Because of finances I was not able to complete it
There are teachers who can do that
And that was good

I continued to speak with Rosemary about the educational influences she had during her formative years and she told me about the pastor who was another influential figure.

[One of the things you mentioned earlier though, which was part of your experiences, had to do with the interest your teacher showed in you.]

And this is Rosemary's response:

Yes, yes, not only in school
We had that interest also in the church
We had a pastor who came and dragged us out from under the bed to go to Sunday school
And that's the kind of family feeling you get back there
The interest you get back there
That there was the connection, you know
With the teacher and the parents
I am not sure if it is because it is a smaller community or whatever
But the parents know the teacher
The teachers know the parents
That kind of thing
And it wasn't hard for them to drive by
And stop by
And talk to your dad
And talk to your mom

Whatever

They would come home and talk to your parents without you asking them to do so

Without you even getting in trouble in school

Here is a teacher coming home to say

Get the kids into school

Get the kids into school

Get the kids into church

You know and stuff like that

I know that happened to us

. . .

She continues:

Anybody else I don't know

But I know

For us

That took place

And this pastor

Today

He is still alive

And my Mom still goes to his church

[So the teacher, pastor, and parents worked as a group to raise the child?]

Yes

And even though

Our pastor wasn't highly educated

You know

My mom

I don't even remember seeing her reading a book

But she always says to us

Pick up a book

You know

[She laughs]

'Pick up a book!'

But, you learn from experiences

But there wasn't that experience

Like to see her doing it

[And] to follow

You know what I mean

. . .

We didn't see our mom doing that

Our dad used to read

But it was his prayer books

It was his prayer books

His prayer books

My mom used to read the Bible

That was the only thing you would see her with

But any other book

You did not see [that]

But

She would always say

Why don't you pick up a book

Why don't you

Go, study

(Rosemary, personal communicaton, June 21, 2004)

In some ways I sense the limitations that Rosemary experienced, and these exposed my own privileged subjectivity. However, these limitations were somewhat compensated by the accompanying drive and determination of which she spoke throughout our discussion. From Rosemary's conversations, I understood that while she did not complete her high school, she still had an interest in education and a dream to complete her high school. The dialogue also displays much about her parents' feelings about schooling and the importance of getting a formal education. My other conversations with her showed that within the home, the parents passed on informal knowledge to their children. However, the relationship between the parents and the community was such that each understood what roles they should or perhaps could assume in order to help children self-actualize. This is not to assume that all families functioned as Rosemary's did. I also cannot assume that all communities functioned similarly. Still, this was Rosemary's experience and in some ways it parallels my own.

A lack of education opportunities in Trinidad and Tobago meant that Rosemary would only obtain her school leaving certificate (equivalent to Grade 9 in Alberta) before she immigrated to Canada. However, once here she did complete her high school education. She calls this her drive. As she shares this personal drive with me, you see the extent to which she charts her future with education as the main focus.

So there was a big gap
After I finished my school leaving [exam]
There was a big gap in between there
There were jobs in between where I worked in stores and things like that
But I always had that
I always had that drive then
Like I wanted more
My parents couldn't afford the "more"
But I knew I wanted more
So at the age of fourteen I wrote away
To
I think it was the States
I found a newspaper and I wrote
Looking at applications saying
I want to do this or I want to do that
I wrote to go to the States
Saying

I think I want to go to school

I did not know how I was going to get there

I did not know how I was going to pay for it

Like I said, the drive was there

And they wrote me back and said

You have to have this

And you have to have that

And all this kind of stuff

[She laughs.]

My parents never knew that I did that

It was just my drive

It was just the drive that I had

I wanted to have more than what I had then

(Rosemary, personal communicaton, June 21, 2004)

Pamela's experience as someone with a Caribbean middle-class background was closer to my own. We had a similar Catholic elementary school experience, we were both successful with the Common Entrance Exam, and we both went on to government-run secondary schools.

[Okay. Now please tell me about your Caribbean schooling experience.]

To this she replies:

It was wonderful

Ah, yes one of the main highlights was

You know

I attended the Point Cumana R.C. School

And I took the Common Entrance Exam

And in those days it was not ...

It was almost like a scholarship because only a selected number of students could take that exam [and]

That would pass the exam

So I was able to attend St. James Secondary

My discussion with Errol points out the connections that are made between education and social mobility. He says:

You learn from experience

And you pick up from your brothers and sisters

And that's the beautiful thing

Like in my family

My eldest brother

He was a teacher

And that is where you had to be

In my area that was the highest field

So everybody had to become a teacher

And you know [that is what you did] if you want to get money

Community Capacity Building

School as Community and of the Community

Rosemary's dialogue addressed the impact that a lack of economic resources could have on a student's ability to complete an education in the Caribbean. Writing about education as a factor of social class, I also demonstrated the length the community went to in order to mediate and resolve issues impacting children's schooling. The dialogue also showed community outreach where teachers got involved to empower students towards self-actualization. Errol's statements demonstrated once again the ways teachers reached out to the parents at their homes or in the community.

And that's another thing
Again
Following in the footsteps
People were always helping you in school
And so forth
You would have teachers who would come home
I had a teacher, she was very nice
She was my neighbour
. . .
She would come there
She would talk to my mother
And tell my mother

This is what I would want from the kids

[He slaps his hands on the table]

And this is for the kids

And then she would talk to the kids and parents and so forth and explain things

You don't find that

Too much of that up here

(Errol, personal communication, June 30, 2004)

Rosemary and Errol's elucidations allowed me to understand that the capacity incurred by linking community (church), school and family in the education system was not something that was unique to my own experiences, but was a somewhat common practice in the Caribbean. This observation is important as it points out that Caribbean education culture includes teacher-parent meetings at the parent's home where the teacher could speak to the parent in an unstructured environment and parents do not have to be overly anxious about parent-teacher meetings.

Community Capacity building Contributed to Sports' Camaraderie: A Neat Setup

Pamela: I remember I used to [play team sports],

My position I played was always defence

Whether it was basketball or netball

And you know basketball was a far more aggressive game

And I would tell you

I would rather be fouled sometimes rather than let the ball get through.

[Laughter]

And on the netball court

This girl I knew we came from the same village

She played center

And so

We had quite a neat setup where she would

Or

I would get the ball to her

Because she could get into places where I couldn't

And so another bond was there

That camaraderie was really good too

[J: What else?]

Well we went swimming, you know

It wasn't the sort of activity that our parents could provide for us

But through that school we were able to go to things

Like swimming lessons and music lessons

Participate in the music festivals

And

A lot of extracurricular cultural activities

With some of my other participants, such as Pamela and Errol, I saw another side of this community and communal endeavour towards the education of children. This is observed by what Pamela said when we spoke about the community and volunteering.

In terms of being more specific to the question

I mean it was a good experience academically

And in all ways

We had good relationships with the teachers and the community

We volunteered

And so it is a rich experience that can match any

That is how I experienced it

. . .

We had people from the church come in

We went out to help at different events like feeding the poor

. . .

Any connections that perhaps the teachers or somebody had

We were involved with them at that time

We had school feeding programs

[She laughs]

I tell you I volunteered

But you know

I ate some of that food, too

Again I wanted to get more of an understanding of community involvement. I asked Pamela to tell me how involved her parents were with her education, to which she replied:

No

It was structured differently,

Because the community was structured differently

Parents went to work

But teachers, and neighbours and friends were more directly involved in our lives than it is here

Like, I used to have to get a ride to school with a friend or a ride home with friends

During the vacation time I visited with friends and the family

[Do you mean here or in Trinidad]

Pamela continues:

In Trinidad

So

I mean the way it was structured at home

At that time

I think it could be changing now

Again because of lifestyle

But back then it was more of a community driven thing

And

So my parents were not directly involved in visiting

It wasn't even structured like that at all

There were some volunteers

But you did not have that close interaction with parents and [volunteering in] the school

Like we find it necessary to have here

Community Capacity Building: The Breakfast Shed

Community endeavours included other activities of which Pamela and I spoke.

[Yes I tend to agree with you, too.

I tend to see my schooling as so much community driven,

Community outward

The school was a source that went into the community

Was that something that you saw with yours?]

Definitely, we had people from the church come in

You know

So

. . .

[I am happy that you mentioned those school feeding programs because my aunt, Aunt Clemmie was responsible for that. All I know of my Aunt Clemmie is that she ran this breakfast shed [a mid-day food program] to feed people; the students in the community.]

So was this something that they paid for or not?

[No, no, it came out of the Coterie of Social Workers. Do you remember the Coterie of Social Workers?]

Now that you mention it

Yes it is coming back to me

They did good works

My Aunt Clemmie and many of the other members of The Coterie of Social Workers understood that students needed to be fed if they were to perform well at school. She had two open air corrugated galvanized sheds in her back yard. These sheds had many rows of tables and benches. Whenever I visited her place, I observed women cooking simple split-peas and rice "cook-up" dish in very large pots. This belief in feeding the body also extended to teachers in other schools that did not have direct access to community school programs. In those cases teachers provided books and food to needy students. Ursula mentions the following about one of her teachers:

[When you said excellence, in terms of what, what do you mean, give me an example?]

Well for reading and stuff

Like there was no real library

But she would buy books and loan it to us

So if you did not have the parent who saw the need

She filled that need

. . .

I remember her even cooking and bringing food to school

You know

That kind of stuff

For the kids

Who didn't have

[And what grade was that, or what standard was that?]

I would say

Maybe at about three

I know that the food my aunt fed to the students must have made a difference because some of them reminded me about this much later.

Competition for High School

Espinet (2003) writes about the education experience of her character Mona, and it bears a remarkable resemblance to what would have been the case for most 11-year-olds in the Caribbean:

> I (Mona) recalled my anxiety as I waited through the long vacation for the results of the government exhibition. . . . We were only eleven but our whole lives were to be decided by those examination results. Every school on the island had an exhibition class, but out of five thousand students only the first five hundred were picked for high school. (p. 135)

My inquiries about high school experiences brought out this response from Ursula:

High school is very, very competitive down there

So you have to write the exam and all that kind of stuff.

[Oh so let's go back to that then, as that was in elementary school]

So you do that in elementary

[Did you have to study a lot for that?]

Yes

[And how was it? I don't think anyone so far has mentioned it, may be one or two, what kind of studying process did you have?]

Well pretty well

The teachers

There was that woman I told you [about]

Teacher Evelyn and there was that Mrs. Belle

Who,

It was so important to them

The schools competed

Because you would see that

They published how many kids from their school got accepted

And how many from that school

This

So pretty well they gave priority to probably the top ten percent of the students, which is so unfair at the same time but ...

[So did you have to study a lot?]

Oh yes,

And really prepare

And you know

And get all the sample exams

And you know.

[And how old were you when you took that exam?]

How old

May be about 11

[I think now they call it eleven plus.]

I think about 11

So that was

Maybe the most pressure

[I remember that exam and I think it was set in Britain]

Every damn thing was set in Britain

I think they even used to correct the papers out there.

[In Britain, yes they did]

[We laugh]

It was also kind of excited

And I am

I also

Because I was kind of the adventurous type

I wanted to go to a school that was not in my hometown.

[So for your high school, where did you go to school?]

Into the capital

And so

I ended up staying in what they called a boarding school.

Our High School Experience: Students are to be Seen and not Heard

Going to School away from Home

By the time Bunny started high school, Daddy had a more hands-off approach with him. Bunny was not going to school in Point Fortin, where the family lived, but in Port-of-Spain, capital of Trinidad. Thus, Bunny was more independent. About two years after Bunny started high school, we all moved from Point Fortin to Petit Bourg, which was much closer to the city. I could no longer ride my bike to school and I had to find and establish new friends, which was quite difficult. This relocation was forced on us because Shell Trinidad Oil Company, where Daddy worked as a pharmacist, was restructuring its production and retrenched or laid off many of its workers. This was a very stressful affair for many of my friends' parents, as all of our families worked in this one-industry town and lived in company houses, which the company had sold to its employees just prior to revealing their restructuring plan. My family was fortunate for Daddy was able to negotiate his severance package, as he was one of the few professionals and was a member of the senior staff. Daddy used the funds he received from the company to open his pharmacy in Petit Bourg. I changed schools after the Easter school break, and due to the traffic, I was unable to ride my bike to school. Thus, I took the train to school, which was more fun than one can imagine, because the train was the domain of many of the students who went to school along the 50-mile east-west corridor from Arima to Port-of-Spain. It was an exhibition of a kaleidoscope of coloured uniforms. This encouraged us to behave in public, for our uniforms were identity markers. If students in uniforms misbehaved we ran the risk of being reported to our schoolmaster because we could easily be identified and disciplined appropriately.

School uniforms had other identity markers as they could be used to identify who went to first tier schools and who did not. The uniforms also told things about the individual as it was supposed to be an extension of one's identity. The saying to which we subscribed was, "Clothes make the man [sic]." So what Ursula said about her uniform in response to my questions was not surprising.

[Did you wear school uniforms?]

Yes.

[What colour was it?]

Navy and white shirt

[She laughs]

[With white shirts?]

[We laugh].

And the pleats!

[Any ties?]

We wore ties in high schools,

But not in elementary

[Not in elementary schools, and you crease the pleats you say?]

Oh yea

As they say:

They (the pleat) cut like a knife.

[We laugh]

The trains were also social structures where students who went to one school would not associate with others who did not go to a school of similar status. Many of the elitist schools were also gendered as well, but on the train you could see the mixing along social standings and class. Gaining entry to these schools gave the student other privileges. As such, familial social class could be set aside and the student could endeavour to ascend social class based on school status. So students like Bunny, who went to St. Mary's College or Queens Royal College, had the choice of girls with whom they could associate. Invariably they would tend to fraternise with girls from similar schools; that is, who went to St. Joseph's Convent or Bishop Anstey High School. St. George's College, which I attended, did not have the same status as those older established schools. However, because it was one of the first government-funded secondary schools, it had some status. We were a composite secondary school and we had our own niche, which we exploited. In school we belonged to many gender inclusive clubs, so it was not unusual to see us in mixed groups when we were off the school premises. I was a member of the chess, science, and photography clubs, and I played house (intramural) netball and was a member of Girl Guides.

Other research participants also experienced the competition to get into a high status school. In other Caribbean countries this meant that students went to boarding schools and had to devise similar means of socializing since these were gender segregated schools. Politically the Caribbean countries were technically moving from colonial to a post-colonial government system, and this was reflected in schooling. I remember going to school in Point Fortin when there was a lot of labour strife. On my way to school, I witnessed prominent trade union leaders like Tubal Uriah (Buzz) Butler making speeches about the unfairness of the oil company's downsizing policies while encouraging others within earshot to participate in an upcoming rally. In civics classes our teacher would explain the meanings of Mr. Butler's actions along with what was included in the text. Daddy encouraged us to listen to the Red House (seat of government in Trinidad and Tobago) debates, which came over the radio at 8:00 p.m. sharp nightly when the house was in session. The country moved from colonial government, through a West Indian Federation, to self-government and finally to independence. Increasingly, the governments were stressing a more comprehensive education for students, allowing them to attend school to age 17. Teachers and students had the collective experience of seeing the Union Jack lowered and our nation's flag hoisted in its place. This brought with it national pride of self-reliance and control of one's destiny rhetoric. Some 10 years later this emancipatory drive intensified in Grenada, and one of my research participants reflected in detail that the way things were occurring in the community was intertwined with her school experience. According to her, the students were one of the organized groups involved in the country's politics.

The Prefect System in High School

School discipline in high school was hierarchical as it ranged throughout the school. We all belonged to a house. For example, when I attended St. George's College I belonged to St. Patrick's House. We also had house colours. These were very evident during team events and on sports day. Each house had a representative, termed a prefect, in each class. The prefect system was part of many of our school experiences in the Caribbean. Prefects, who were elected by the members of the class in the respective houses, kept a meticulous log in which was recorded such things as punctuality, attendance, neatness. He or she was responsible to the head girl or boy and performed such duties as rating the members who belonged to the particular house. The prefects were also responsible for assisting the others in maintaining team spirit throughout the year. It was a responsibility that was taken very seriously.

> *[And it was a wonderful experience, I was the class prefect, and head girl and I joined a whole number of club activities.*
>
> *. . .*
>
> *So tell me about your prefect experience, because I had the same experience. Tell me about your prefect experience]*
>
> *Well I guess there is some sort of leadership qualities there*
>
> *I guess*
>
> *Well you know how it is divided into various forms*
>
> *And you know it was a good experience*
>
> *Because you get the respect from your classmates*
>
> *And with the other prefects you form a solid core of friendships*
>
> *Friends that I have up to today*
>
> *I keep in touch with several of them regularly*
>
> *And we practically had the run of the school*

[She laughs]

You know

Supported by the teachers, the principal

One of my good friends

Her family knew the principal well.

We didn't cross the line

But we were able to go down that centre path

Having the respect of our colleagues and also the teachers

[So did the prefect system that you have, did it go from Form 1 to straight up to Form 5 so that all the prefects there had that sort of a bond and they could talk to the other colleagues?]

Yes that's correct

And you were selected

Voted for by your class mates

But you know if you are seen as a leader

You tend to be recognized as a leader throughout

And we were assigned various duties

To go to lunch rooms and so on

And we were also assigned a lower form

[Yes]

So you go down there

And you get to know the kids on a more intimate basis

And when we had that shortage of teachers

Sometimes we would actually go in and try to teach some of the courses

[I heard some people say that their experiences with houses were that there were prefects who were responsible for the younger ones, was that the case with you?]

Yes, there was

But the prefects were selected by the peers which was kind of nice

[Yes]

And

Ahem

They were just like bigger sisters

Morally

Actually one of my prefects

I still keep in touch with her

She lives in Texas

And she was the one

Because I was coming from a country school

Into the city

She kind of showed me the ropes

Actually

. . .

Or even in terms of the house mother

How strict she is

And if you don't want to get in trouble with her

What you do

And what you don't do

[Oh was she a mentor figure for you?]

Yes, yes,

[Wow]

Yes, she was big time

[She laughs]

I was the only one who was the monitor

Because we had prefects

In those cases we had prefects

All the time

And then those prefects could go

And give you lines,

This British thing

So every time you talked they would give you 250 lines

I had to write lots of lines.

[Oh yes, prefects would give out these lines]

Oh yes,

But as a monitor I couldn't give lines

But I could report people

During the focus group Errol elaborated more on the circumstances that led to him getting the monitor's badge, and this was followed by remarks from other members of the group. This episode demonstrated the common understanding that was held by most of the group as to the intent of the punishment. However, the majority of the group questioned Errol as to whether he felt that form of punishment worked.

> *I got licks once in secondary school*
>
> *I was*
>
> *One of the teachers wanted to teach me French*
>
> *And I would say: I don't want to learn French*
>
> *Or something I want to draw*
>
> *She went to the pastor*
>
> *Man*
>
> *He was the principal*
>
> *And he came*
>
> *And beat me*
>
> *Right in front of the class*

[Laughter]

Pamela says:

> *That must have been so scary*

And he replies:

> *In front the whole class*
>
> *Man*

I would never forget that one

[Were you embarrassed at the time?]

Oh yes,

Why not

It was the torment at the time

And then

After he called me up

And gave me a monitor badge

And tell me

You are going to be in charge of the class

[Laughter]

Ursula says:

You went through the fire

And he replies:

Oh yes

I went through everything

And I said

Oh I am sorry

I always get myself in trouble

There was a head teacher

And every time they send you to his office

And thing

He would always say
I have to beat you, I have to beat you
And then he would change the conversation
And start to talk about cricket
And thing
And then eat something
And so
We used to talk about cricket all the time

Caribbean Culture and Education: Caribbean Education and Culture

"Caribbean Culture and Education: Caribbean Education and Culture" is a metaphorical phrasing that plays with the notion of "borders and border crossing" as used by Giroux (2005). He contends that the concept of borders and border crossing serves to highlight that the goal of politics is transformative of relations of power as well as public consciousness (Giroux, 2005, p. 2). To continue, Giroux (2005) writes:

> The concept of border crossing not only critiques those borders that confine experience and limit the politics of crossing diverse geographical, social, cultural, economic, and political borders, it also calls for new ways to forge a public pedagogy capable of connecting the local and the global, the economic sphere and cultural politics, as well as public and higher education and the pressing social demands of the larger society. (p. 6)

This application of border brings to the forefront "the complexity of the relationship between power and politics, on the one hand, and agency and social change on the other" (Giroux, 2005, p. 7).

Having been schooled in the Caribbean in the 1950s and '60s, participants of my research and I recognized this period as the transition from colonial rule through self-government and regional federation, to national independence. As citizens of this region, we inhabited the borderlands of colonialism/imperialism and post-colonialism/national independence. Giroux (2005) describes borderlands as arenas that:

> Many people inhabit and cross through a range of pedagogical strategies and ideologies in which the naming, marking, and crossing of various cultural and geographical borders are addressed within the specificity of different contexts, strategies, and pedagogical practices. (p. 6)

Generally, debates about colonialism, anti-colonialism, and post-colonialism involve deconstructing a literary or historic text. But, for us, anti-colonialism, colonialism and post-colonialism discourses were being formulated as we lived out our school lives, and we can now reflect on these discourses from a critical theorist axiological position. According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), my research participants and I tend to believe that "propositional, transactional knowing is instrumentally valuable, as a means to social emancipation which is an end in itself, is intrinsically valuable" (p. 198). The politics of this period emerged repeatedly during our conversations, making it abundantly clear that I could not omit this theme from our understandings of schooling in the Caribbean. As I explained in defining the nature of culture and cultural identity, cultural politics, as an aspect of culture, impacted each of us differently and our discourses reflected this nature of culture. Hence, the cultural politics of this era contributed to our cultural identity and thus the way we interacted with our own education and our children's education in Edmonton.

The research findings show that the participants recognized that they were schooled during the colonialism era. Much of their discussion centres on activities that were done to enhance and promote consciousness. In some instances the participants actually spoke about political awareness, while one participant gave very graphic accounts of the impact that political awareness and action had on her education. Evidence of border crossings in our colonial education came up constantly during the conversations. In terms of formal curriculum this is what Ursula said:

> *I probably knew more about Canada and England than I did about the Caribbean.*
>
> *[Why was that the case?]*
>
> *Maybe colonialism*
>
> *I think colonialism had a lot to do with it.*
>
> (Ursula, personal communication, July 16, 2004)

Again, in informal pedagogy this evidence is seen in the home occurrences Ursula describes.

> *In fact during that period*
>
> *I remember*
>
> *One of the things [I remember]*

And that was more in terms of my family
My grandfather had passed away
And my grandmother came to live with us
And one of her most treasured pieces that she brought was a picture of the Queen
And my mom would not let her put it up
And she was depressed for a whole year because she could not get her Queen on the wall.
So every thing was sort of colonial
Very, very colonial

(Ursula, personal communication, July 16, 2004)

Errol recalls how in his senior class, his history teacher discussed a socialist or communist perspective for his students' critical understanding of the informal knowledge that was topical in everyday discussions. The following is my understanding of the border crossings he experienced during his education.

In those days we had those kinds of communism
And this kind of ism
And this kind of socialism
And that was very big
And people talking about this new system
And that this democracy thing was not the greatest
And this [socialism] would be better,
By the people and for the people,

And those were the heroes

And all of a sudden in the islands they have this notion

They call it communism

And that is a very dirty word.

. . .

Right, if you are a communist

That's a dirty word,

Right

And that came down from [the] British people and so forth.

But it is the smart people.

These are the smart people who say:

Let's look at this other idea,

Look at this one,

And look at that one

And [in] those days Russia was doing good,

Powerful and so forth

So when

We looked at this ism, socialism

And people started reading different books and so forth.

So he was like that,

He was into that a lot and they branded him as a socialist and a communist.

(Errol, personal communication, July 28, 2004)

The poems we studied under colonialism

Research narratives show other examples of the "border crossing" experiences occurred in our poetry learning experiences. During our group discussion, Pamela recited the following poem verbatim:

There Was an Indian

[by]

SIR J. C. SQUIRE

There was an Indian, who had known no change,

Who strayed content along a sunlit beach

Gathering shells. He heard a sudden strange

Commingled noise: looked up; and gasped for speech.

For in the bay, where nothing was before,

Moved on the sea, by magic, huge canoes

With bellying cloths on poles, and not one oar,

And fluttering coloured signs and clambering crews.

And he, in fear, this naked man alone,

His fallen hands forgetting all their shells,

His lips gone pale, knelt low behind a stone,

And stared, and saw, and did not understand,

Columbus's doom-burdened caravels

Slant to the shore, and all their seaman land.

She followed this recitation with the following critique:

> *And I get a chance to say this,*
>
> *That was pre-Columbian times*
>
> *And here is this Sir Squire.*
>
> *That is his perspective.*
>
> *And it gives the idea that the Caribbean was always this peaceful, beautiful place.*
>
> *It is a myth because even before they [the Europeans] came,*
>
> *There were the different tribes of people,*
>
> *And they must have had their own organization.*
>
> *But any way this is the sort of idea,*
>
> *To me it seemed this heralded a change:*
>
> *The colonial period came,*
>
> *Because we had the waves:*
>
> *The Spaniards, the French, and what have you*
>
> *And that influenced us*
>
> *It had a lot of negatives*
>
> *But it also brought a lot of positives in the sense*
>
> *Well, because we learnt from French, [and] Spanish, their culture [and] their food.*
>
> *It has become part of who we are.*
>
> *And the love of poetry and literature is part of our culture too.*
>
> *I just thought that sort of illustrated a little bit of what we did.*

The juxtaposition of the formal and the non-formal epitomizes "border crossing" and by virtue of it, what is inherently problematic with an education system that chooses to negate or not take into consideration the knowledge students bring with them to the classroom. In this example I discern someone who uses the dominant language or discourse instrumentally, but is more "at ease" with the vernacular or indigenous way of knowing. Without as much as a pause she moves from reciting the formal to a critique of it in her vernacular or indigenous language. This inherent language and the constituent knowledge it conveyed were never taken up formally in the classroom.

Conclusion

Chapter Four analyzed the formal aspect of the Caribbean education landscape. Our narratives highlighted the formal educational experiences we had as school children in the Caribbean. We spoke about the relationships between our teachers and our families, and the relationship between our schools and the community. Our teachers felt responsible for helping the families of their students to understand and navigate the school culture. The teachers in the Caribbean understood the culture of the families they taught. For example, they knew that some students' parents did not have the financial resources for their children to attend secondary school. They also knew that some children came to school hungry. They also believed that their school children needed formal education for self-actualization, and tried to cater to the student's holistic needs. My research participants singled out those teachers who worked with them to attain those needs.

The narratives provided compelling evidence of the Anglo-Caribbean people's valuing of education. The participants spoke about how their parents instilled the importance of education in their children. One participant spoke about her drive for education. One teacher even sought out one of our research participants and encouraged her to come back to elementary school when she could not afford to attend secondary school. These narratives identified that the families believed education was important for social mobility. Education was one aspect of Anglo-Caribbean cultural frame of reference. These narratives also elucidated that education was at a time when we were questioning colonialism and would have been moving between the proverbial borders of colonialism and nationalism. The cultural identity model is applicable here because it provides a plausible explanation of my research participants' cultural identities with reference to education and the degrees to which they interacted with education. The narratives showed that these influences depended on many concepts. Some of these included socio-economic status, gender, parental influence and personal drive. In Chapter Five I will deconstruct the informal and non-formal education we experienced in the Caribbean. Here I discuss how our political culture and popular culture influenced how we viewed education, knowledge construction and their impact on our development.

CHAPTER FIVE: COLONIALISM AND CARIBBEAN SCHOOLING

Historical Background

In the previous chapters I discussed the factors that encouraged me to pursue this research. I stated that my experiences with rupture and lack of recognition explained how I viewed my children's education and how it encouraged me to seek an understanding of Caribbean education and the education Caribbean heritage children receive in Edmonton as these children aspire to self-actualization. An in-depth review of the current literature provided an understanding of the education landscape and the factors contributing to the Caribbean Canadian experiences. The cultural studies themes embedded in the Caribbean Canadian experience, culture, diaspora, and imaginary landscapes ground this research. Hence the theoretical underpinnings of these themes dictated formularization of Caribbean cultural identity. With this knowledge I used Ogbu's theory of culture and school success to develop my own understanding of Caribbean Canadian cultural and school success. To form my understandings of Ogbu's theory, I asked my research participants to narrate their education stories. From their stories and my experiences, I was able to conclude that Caribbean Canadian people do have a Caribbean school culture. Emerging from this discourse was found poetry which became the format for presenting their dialogue. Poetry was also important to the discourse as it provided clear insight into my research participants' "border crossing" (Giroux, 2005, pp. 1–7) experiences.

Chapter Five will discuss the role that colonialism and post-colonialism played in our education in the Caribbean with an analysis of this "border crossing" discourse. Critical discourse analysis is the method of analysis used to interrogate the formal and informal education discourses of our youth, to understand the ways these informed how we pursue the present education of our children.

As a discussion about "border crossing" is important to my research, I will start this section with my own recollections of this phenomenon. Trinidad and Tobago became independent on August 31, 1962. I remember staying up to watch our Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams, lower the Union Jack and raise the national flag of Trinidad and Tobago aloft in Woodford Square. Colonial states such as India and countries in Africa gained their independence from Britain after protracted struggles, but British Caribbean countries got their individual independence with a "nationalist expression [that] was more genteel, more muted, less confrontational, and less vituperative" (Palmer, 2006, p. 19). Nonetheless, it was a very memorable day for all the people and of course, the school children. Our new motto was "Discipline, tolerance and production." Our political leaders and scholars spoke and wrote about the sense of accomplishment we were experiencing as we were to control our own national destiny, and the English speaking islands in the Caribbean were no longer British colonies. Jamaica became independent on August 6, 1962, and, four years later in November 1966, Barbados became the third British West Indian Island to become independent. This movement towards independence or republic status continued in the late 20th century and today most countries in the Caribbean can claim this achievement.

Education at the Dawn of Independence—"Massa Day Done"

As part of our political education, our parents emphasized that we listen to the parliamentary debates during the pre-independence period. This emphasis was possible because of the public pedagogical work Williams and his People's National Party (PNM) did to educate the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago (Palmer, 2006). The People's National Movement was the first national political party in Trinidad and Tobago, its members educated citizens through meetings in town squares throughout the country. Eric Williams, the first Black Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, recalls in his 1962 writings:

> The People's National Movement made the first plank in its platform the political education of the people. It organised what has now become famous in many parts of the world, the University of Woodford Square, with constituent colleges in most of the principal centres of population in the country. The political education dispensed to the population in these centres of political learning was of a high order and concentrated from the outset on placing Trinidad and Tobago within the current of the great international movements for democracy and self-government. The electorate of the country was able to see and understand its problems in the context of the ancient Athenian democracy or the federal systems of the United States and Switzerland, in the context of the great anti-colonial movements of Nehru and Nkruma, and in the context of the long and depressing history of colonialism in Trinidad and Tobago and the West Indies. The voter in Trinidad

> and Tobago was quite suddenly invested with a dignity for which he was obviously, by his response, well-fitted. (p. 244)

This was the role of the movements which political parties undertook and which my research participants and I experienced growing up in the Caribbean in the 1950s and 1960s. These were arenas for contested debates as anyone could have the opportunity to express his or her opinion, and crowds gathered there nightly to listen to the debates from the cabinet at the Red House (the parliament building) and articulate their positions. Daily, on my way to school, I saw Tubal Uriah (Buzz) Butler pontificating on my friend's veranda about the unfair labour practices that existed at Trinidad and Tobago's Shell and Texaco Oil companies. I thus agree with Williams' (1962) description of Butler as the politician who "brought the inarticulate masses on a national scale on to the political stage" (p. 243), and his assessment that this anti-colonial sentiment was rampant throughout the Caribbean. I struggled with viewing colonialism, anti-colonialism, and post-colonialism in terms of discourses which must be deconstructed, because, for me, my experiences with those notions were lived experiences rooted in formal and public pedagogy. Post-colonial theorists such as C. L. R. James (1963/2002), JanMohamed (1995), George Lamming (1995), Said (1979) and others who emphasized the importance of the literary text "as a site of cultural control and as a highly effective instrument for the determination of the 'native' by fixing him/her under the sign of the other" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995, pp. 8–9) confirmed this belief.

JanMohamed's argument is:

> Colonialist literature is divisible into two broad categories: the "imaginary" and the "symbolic." The emotive as well as the cognitive intentionalities of the "imaginary" text are structured by objectification and aggression. . . . The "imaginary" novel maps the European's intense internal rivalry. The "imaginary" representation of indigenous people tends to coalesce the signifier with the signified. . . . Writers of symbolic texts, on the other hand are more aware of the inevitable necessity of using the native as a mediator of European desires. (p. 19)

At school, we experienced other aspects of colonialism in the form of the poetry we were taught to memorize. Our teacher was supposed to help us with our development. We trusted our teachers, our intent was not to question our curriculum, and we obediently repeated carefully crafted verses oblivious of their racist intent. Careful analysis would reveal the subtle degrading elements interwoven in the knowledge that was constructed in the classroom of Caribbean schools. Apple (2004) writes about the capacity of "schools to create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination" (p. 2) to support my argument. Apple (2004) also references Bernstein, Young, and others to state that "the structuring of knowledge and symbol in . . . educational institutions is intimately related to the principles of social and cultural control in a society" (p. 2). He also believes that while a focus on linking economic outcomes—"the reproduction of the division of labor" (p. 2)—social reproduction and mobility to education is important, the role of education on cultural reproduction is equally important and hence proper analysis of the impact that education has on cultural reproduction is appropriate. But underlying this attempt at cultural reproduction was the debasing of the culture of the non-Whites who live in the British colonies. Evidence of this type of schooling was enunciated by Williams and of this situation Palmer (2006) writes:

> "The intellectual equipment with which I was endowed by The Trinidad school system," Williams wrote in his autobiography, "had two principal characteristics—quantitatively it was rich; qualitatively, it was British. 'Be British' was the slogan not only of legislature but also of the school."
>
> "Williams was harshly critical of the other deleterious effects of the colonial education he received. He considered his schooling "un-West Indian." "My training," he added, was divorced from any thing remotely suggestive of Trinidad and the West Indies." Only the academically weaker students were expected to study West Indian history. "What the school disparaged," Williams wrote, "the society despised." (p. 16)

Palmer (2006) states that Williams' autobiography points out that imperialist scholars and historians at universities were responsible for writing disparaging commentaries about Blacks. He continues:

> Referring to historians at universities, Williams charged: "It is they who, in the British circles in particular, were able to penetrate the ranks of the people who became the members of Parliament . . . making the laws for the colonies, the administrators and governors governing the colonies, creating a climate in the public mind which is responsible for the attitude . . . to West Indian areas and West Indian people today. (p. 19)

Those who wrote the curriculum and material we studied were no doubt influenced by this climate and the verses of poetry we quote and remembered evidenced these behaviours. But once Williams arrived on the political scene his ambition was "to free his society from all vestiges of colonial rule" (Palmer, 2006, p. 17) He attempted to achieve this by making statements such as: "Imperialist historians openly set out to despise the West Indian capacity, and today you are independent" (Palmer, p.17). As students, we visited these terrains that our formal and informal education occupied daily. Thus it is quite easy to describe our education as a "border crossing" experience.

The information one of my research participant presents certainly points out that our colonial education inculcated a hegemony based on self-depreciation. Taylor (1994) describes this image and the resulting effect in this statement of recognition:

> An analogous point has been made in relationship to blacks: that white society has for generations projected a demeaning image of them, which some of them have been unable to resist adopting. Their own self-depreciation, on this view, becomes one of the most potent instruments of their own oppression. (p. 26)

This is evident in one of the poems Lance, a research participant, recited "There Lived a Sage" by J. C. Squire.

Formal and Informal Opportunities: The Mango Tree and Mentorship

Sometimes teachers introduced our indigenous ways of learning into their pedagogical practices in the classroom. Other memories I have are the times we spent under the mango tree reciting poems, or listening to our teachers read us "Anansi stories" and folk tales, or learning our spelling or playing "Spelling Bees." The mango tree was also a fun place as the cool breeze allowed us to relax and enjoy it. Sometimes our eyes would gaze into the heavens to spur imagination. At other times they would inspire imagination through our gazing at birds flying over head. At other times our teacher would shout to us to pay attention if this caused absent-mindedness when it was our turn to spell. These times also allowed us to stand by our best friends, especially if they did not sit close to us in class. If we stood with the boys, we would play with the leaf-cutting ants that were scurrying along with a piece of grass many times larger in mass than they were, or we would stamp on them. Also we could tease the boys or even participate in their jokes surreptitiously, all in fun. The girls could do mischievous things with them and let them take the blame. In those controlled settings we were able to explore each other's feelings without having to deal with the rough and tumble of the playground.

The males in my research were particularly sensitive to this pedagogy that their male teachers provided. This is what Lance remembered fondly about his experiences with poetry:

It is beautiful that you brought a poem
And . . .
I am able to remember it from then,
Because back then
My experience was
He would take the class outside
And we had a mango tree by the school,

[He would] take the class outside

And we had to learn this by heart

And then recite it to the class.

And this teacher in particular,

His name is Mr. Hackett

And he would explain what the poem meant to us

And I think I developed a love for poetry then

And what comes to mind,

I don't know who the author of this poem was

But hmm,

It goes something like this:

"I am monarch of all I survey,

By right there is none to dispute,

From the center all round to the sea

I am the lord of the foul and the brute,

O solitude where are the charms and sages I have seen in thy face,

Better dwell in the midst of a lamb, than reign in this horrible place."

From that experience

That poem stuck with me.

(Lance, personal communication, August 1, 2004)

As this setting for learning was a safe space, my research participant says "that poem stuck with" him. This melding of formal in-class work with informal pedagogy was carried on after school as well and, according to my research participants, this allowed for mentoring opportunities. Some teachers were also providing critical thinking exercises to students.

> *[So who did the organizing for this group of guys to go hiking?]*
>
> *Oh the teachers*
>
> . . .
>
> *Yes, the teachers did.*
>
> *Actually this guy who was involved with us*
>
> *He is the premier right now in St. Vincent.*
>
> . . .
>
> *Ralph Gonzales?*
>
> . . .
>
> *Yes he taught at my school, Bishop's College, Georgetown.*
>
> *He organized cricket,*
>
> *A lot of cricket matches against people in Kingstown.*
>
> . . .
>
> *What happened is that he had just finished going to [high] school*
>
> *And I think he had got seven or eight GCE courses*
>
> *And he was just teaching for a while*
>
> *And he went to university.*
>
> *He is a doctor*
>
> *He got his Ph D.*

He was a very smart guy

So he was teaching.

He organized those things.

. . .

[J: So in those days when you were young, and he was just coming up, he was the kind of person who occupied a sort of a mentor role and not only taught you to organize yourself to go camping and hiking but also gave you all some sort of socialist teachings and things like that.]

Right,

He talked about socialism and so forth,

He was a history teacher.

[Ah he was a history teacher?]

Yes

He used to teach us history

And so forth.

[So you really had some sort of a close connection with him because you said that you liked history?]

Yes, I would say so,

[He laughs]

Because I met him some years later and he did not remember me

But I remembered him.

[He was the one person that made an impact on your life; you would say, did he?]

He made an impact,

Because

You see

The truth about it was that

When I was in government school

I wasn't doing that well,

But as soon as I went to secondary school

[He snaps his fingers]

Boy, everything just changed for me.

This passage suggests that Mr. Gonzales understood that he had to remove his students from within the structures of their oppression, so that they could become conscious of it and understand the effects of it. As he made Errol aware of his oppression, he also helped him to understand the importance of understanding history and the role that our history played in contributing to our oppression. This understanding has stayed with Errol. History became his favourite subject. He has also read the works of Walter Rodney, one of our great Caribbean social theorists and has purchased Rodney's books (*The groundings with my brothers*, 1969 and *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*, 1972) for his children. Errol emphasized this point, as our conversation continued and he spoke about his love for history:

I could think and look at trends

And so forth.

I like doing that

You know and to see how history repeats itself.

You could see trends. When I came up to Canada

You know

I was reading books like Malcolm X

And oh

I have some books like How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.

Those are wonderful books.

. . .

I do have that

I have two sets at home.

I will give one to each kid.

[Who wrote that; How Europe Underdeveloped Africa?]

It was Walter Rodney.

[And] Groundings of our Brothers

I read that one too.

[What is that called?]

And there is another one that he wrote but I can't remember that one. Actually I gave J them as well and she was really impressed with them as well.

[I do not know if you were in Montreal at that time but when Walter Rodney came to Montreal and he spoke I was really impressed. I was just a student at that time at the university then and got involved in going to these conferences. And talk

about conferences that could energize you. I was really impressed with Walter Rodney.]

Walter was good

I never met him

But I have read his books

And so forth

I believe that this level of awareness is an illustration of Freire's (1993/2005) conscientização model, and an example of how it manifests itself in individuals' lives. Errol states that he will give a copy of Walter Rodney's book to each of his children, thus implying that he intends for it to influence their conscentization and critical thinking. This goes back to the influence that Mr. Hackett's Marxist socialist theory and critical pedagogy had on him. Errol lives out this Freirean perspective:

> When they discover within themselves the yearning to be free, they perceive that this yearning can be transformed into reality only when the same yearning is aroused in their comrades. (p. 47)

Lance also spoke of learning in an informal pedagogical setting, a group organized by a political party at the national level to help boys who were not succeeding in schools to learn a trade and to learn about national citizenship outside the school structure.

I was a member of the People's National Movement Youth Group.

. . .

And that allowed me to go to the youth camp where they taught trade,

> *There were like a hundred and fifty guys from all over Trinidad and Tobago So for me that was fun to meet people from all different areas of Trinidad and Tobago.*

Emancipatory Education—"That was When They were Planning the Revolution

Freire's (1993/2005) assumptions and analysis of oppression rang true for many of my research participants' experiences with colonial education. Those experiences exemplified the realities of systemic change and "the process of achieving freedom" (p. 49), which they explored in very contested arenas. Freire (1993/2005) writes:

> The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between human solidarity and alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world. (p. 48)

This statement may apply to the mental dialectic that occurs with those who aspire to be free, struggle in the liminal space between "this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois, 1990, p. 8). Thus, even for symbolic freedom, the action is a very contentious but courageous act. The scenario for symbolic freedom as fought for by people in Grenada and in the school experience of another one of my research participants exemplifies this. The dissatisfaction with the role of British education and colonialism was even more apparent by the time Ursula attended elementary school. This is evident in the following dialogue:

> *Well, other than being quite rigid*
> *As I thought it was*
> *The fun part I think was more the friendships, than the school*
> *It seems it was very structured, very rigid elementary school.*
> *[So when you say, give me an idea about the structure that you are referring to?]*
> *Well in terms of the books*
> *It was all British focus*
> *And I remember one of the things very clearly,*
> *I could probably say this,*
> *All this kind of rebelliousness*
> *I was that kind of person*
> . . .
> *[Who, You were the rebellious person?}*
> *Yes*

Ursula attended secondary school at a time and place when opposition to colonialism was even more vehement and vociferous than when I was a secondary school student in the Caribbean. The pronouncements against vestiges of colonialism pervaded the halls of education with dire consequences for the students and their education. The experience Ursula described was quite different from my anti-colonialism experiences, which had occurred 10 years earlier. As I indicated previously, my father encouraged us to be part of the colonial/anti-colonial debates, and the government meetings and legislature debates provided these educative opportunities. The anti-colonial discourse challenged the masses to be responsible, and to demonstrate the capacity to govern themselves (Palmer, 2006). With Ursula's experience we see students participating in public demonstrations in support of national democracy (Hodge & Seale, n. d.). The following is her response to the question I posed to her:

> *[In terms of your Caribbean school culture, how will you describe yourself?]*
>
> *There were*
>
> *I could recall maybe*
>
> *[In] my last year or two in high school*
>
> *There were maybe about three distinct groups*
>
> *There were the ones who pretty well resigned themselves to "I had better start looking for a man and get married, a man who was working and that kind of stuff" [laugh],*
>
> *And there were very political ones*
>
> *And then there were the very*
>
> *How should I put this*

The very academic ones who knew that they were likely to leave Grenada because

there was not enough to offer them there

So that was kind of the groups you gravitated to.

[You saw three groups. Okay. How did they [organize themselves]?

Do you care to say which group you gravitated towards?]

I was the more political one, which scared the daylight out of my parents.

[Is that right? What happened?]

Well the thing is at the time it was during the period of Maurice Bishop[6]

And all of those

[Oh you went to school during the Maurice Bishop era. I did not realize that.]

And the challenging thing

For me

---

[6] Maurice Bishop was the leader of a political party in Grenada in the 1970. Grenadian leader and Marxist revolutionary. Born in 1944 to Rupert and Alimenta Bishop, Maurice grew up in the British-controlled Caribbean island of Grenada. Like many people in the country, Bishop led a poverty-stricken childhood due to a lack of industrialization and Britain's lack of concern for the Grenadians' well-being. . . . Bishop had formed the New Jewel Movement (NJM) in 1973, mainly from the merging of the Movement for Assemblies of the People (MAP) and the Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education and Liberation (JEWEL). After the independence of Grenada, Bishop's NJM became the chief opponent party to Sir Gairy. Though the island's population numbered below 100,000, Bishop and the NJM was able to rally tens of thousands against the dictatorship of Gairy. In retaliation, Gairy unleashed his fascistic henchmen, who called themselves the "Mongoose Gang." They were responsible for the deaths of many strikers in Grenada, including Maurice's father Rupert. In 1979, Bishop and his comrades learned of a plan put forward by Gairy to assassinate the NJM's leaders while the dictator was out of the country. In March of that year, they were able to thwart it with a bloodless seige which took over the nation's single radio station. With the mass support of the people, Bishop came to power and Gairy found himself without a regime to return to. . . . On October 19, 1983, Bishop and most other leaders of the government were rounded up by Coard and his military clique and executed. Bishop and his wife were shot dead in a small and isolated hut in the forest.(The New West Indian, No 14, March 2002, retrieved August 27, 2005)

Was that my dad was the deputy Chief-of-Police

And I did everything that he resented.

[Oh my goodness!]

And that ended my relationship,

There was the stress with that

But I think it was easy

[That ended what!]

And that was the stressful part in terms of my parents

My family

But what made it easy for me

Was that I went to boarding school

So they did not get to see what I was doing

[There is a resigned laughter]

On occasion I did run into him

But he just looked the other way.

[Oh your dad?]

Yes.

[Were you the one to pick up a picket sign and march?]

Yes

I did lots of marches.

[Why were you doing this?]

Because there needed to be change in Grenada

The government was terrible.

It was pretty well a dictatorship.

[But you were going to school?]

Yes, but the schools were so involved.

The schools and the teachers and the trade unions

They were the ones who were pulling for change.

[And, so they went into the high schools to do that?]

Yes, the high schools were probably the most organized groups.

[Oh the high school was the most organized, oh.]

Yes it was.

You know, it is amazing,

[Pause]

And this is something I have not admitted to anybody before.

I was trained to shoot.

[Oh my God, in the high school?]

In high school

Because that was when they were planning the revolution

And they had done [that],

Because it was so corrupt

It was almost impossible to win a fair election in Grenada.

And,

So they were willing to overthrow the government.

One year after I moved here it did happen.

And my dad always said to me that he saved me

Because I probably would have been dead

And a lot of my peers at the time are still in jail in Grenada

Because they are political prisoners

And there were people who were in my Science Club and my Geography Club

This has been like 23 years now

And they are still in prison

You see

[It makes] sense now

Because my dad passed away

Like about three years ago

And we got to talk about that before he passed away

And I always used to tell him that I think I did for him what he did not have the guts to do.

[Is that right?]

At this point, as Ursula continued with this dialogue, she indirectly underscored how the community's politics influenced her educational experiences by implicating her family. At this point, "border pedagogy" (Giroux, 2005, p. 20) underpins and informs Ursula's education.

> Border pedagogy is attentive to developing a democratic public philosophy that respects the notion of difference as part of a common struggle to extend the

> quality of public life. It presupposes not merely an acknowledgment of the shifting borders that both undermine and reterritorialize different configurations of culture, power, and knowledge. It also links the notions of schooling and the broader category of education to a more substantive struggle for a radical democratic society. (Giroux, 2005, p. 20)

This border pedagogy placed her in a position where she disagreed with her father's stance, which was to uphold the status quo. She continues:

> *Because I think he understood,*
> *He empathized with what I was doing*
> *But because of his position he could not take as strong a stand as I was able to take*
> *And I think a lot about it*
> *I was protected because of him.*
> *A lot of my friends got beaten up and stuff.*
> *I never did get beaten up.*
> *I never,*
> *You know*
> *Had to go through any of that*
> *No a lot of the people I grew up with [did]*
> *And even*
> *I know even before my dad died, he said to me: 'Grenada is at a loss because of it.'*

> *Because of the people who are in jail right now*
>
> *They are probably the cream of the crop.*
>
> *[The critical thinkers?]*
>
> *Yes*
>
> *So they probably lost a whole generation there.*
>
> *[So some of them are your friends?]*
>
> *Yes, we grew up together in school*
>
> (Ursula, personal communicaton, July 16, 2004)

I knew of this period in Grenada's history to which my research participant referred, but it never occurred to me that school children were so deeply involved in the politics of that country. I was therefore very curious to find out how all this could occur in an upper class boarding school, so I continued my questioning.

> *[So how did they get to, I could see them organizing with the boys across the street, so how did they get to the girls to get them organized?]*
>
> *Well the clubs,*
>
> *Because as I said*
>
> *The Geography Club was joint [co-ed]*
>
> *The Science Club was joint [co-ed]*
>
> *And now I still think of it*
>
> *There were a lot of international organizations involved*
>
> *But that I did not pay attention to at the time*

Because even in terms of materials, we got a lot of literature, a lot of books and stuff, from donations from Canadian donors and all over the world who understood what was happening in Grenada and felt it was important to educate

And I think there were teachers who were probably involved

But unknowingly to us

Like stuff would come to me in the mail and I do not even know where the hell it came from.

But they probably knew I would have been interested because of the kind of person I am.

[So when did you start to get political in your high school, what grade, what stage?]

I would say the last two years of high school.

[What was the turning point for you to go from the point of a student, going to school daily and doing your work, the routine of what a student would do to get to this point?]

You know

The thing was

That it was so much so

Because of the discipline we were still doing our school work

And because there were a lot of teachers who were also sympathetic to it

We would literally go into school in the morning,

Do a couple of classes,

Go down town

Or

Go into government house for the demonstration

And then go back to school.

Like you fitted it in there

So you were not missing out on any thing.

And it was like clock work,

People were so passionate about what was happening,

It was just not an elitist thing,

It was the masses

[Grassroots?]

Grassroots

Everybody was involved.

[Wow.]

At this point I felt that it was very important to allow the dialogue to continue to evolve, even though, it was not what I was expecting to hear when I set out to do these interviews with my research participants. I realized this episode of our conversation was now taking place in those metaphorical safe spaces to which researchers go with their research participants (Fine et al., 2000; Young, 2001). Fine et al.'s description states:

> The safe spaces into which we have been invited provide recuperation, resistance, and the making of 'home'. They are not just a set of geographical/special arrangements, there are theoretical, analytical, and spatial displacements—a crack,

> a fissure in an organization or a community. Individual dreams, collective work, and critical thoughts are smuggled in and then reimagined. Not rigidly bounded by walls/fences, the spaces often are corralled by a series of (imaginary) borders where community intrusion and state surveillance are not permitted. (p. 122)

It was a very interesting time for me

. . .

I remember one day there was a police shoot out

That I was at, present to

And I spent about four hours in the sewer.

[In the sewer?]

Yes,

And it was actually that day that Maurice Bishop's father was killed.

[Did his father die too?]

Yes.

[Oh my goodness, I did not know that].

And it was at one of the demonstrations

And I remember,

And maybe those are the things that pull people together

Because another girlfriend of mine who lives in the U.S. now

We were always together

And we would be on the podium

And that day we lost each other in the crowd

So I did not go up there

And he was shot up there

And I remember hiding in the sewer with a bunch of other people

That I don't even know

Because there were guns firing all over the place

And I got my head smacked by my mother when I got home

[She laughs]

Because they could not find me

[Were you in your school uniform at that time?]

A lot of times

Yes

. . .

[Wow.]

Yes, a lot of times.

So that was a big part of my,

My last couple years of high school

I was very, very political.

[Was that in the early 70s?]

Yes, yes.

[It was quite an interesting time.]

I have got a friend who lives in Saskatoon now

And both him and his wife

We have known each other,

Well his wife actually

We went to school

From Kindergarten, together, to high school

And they were quite involved too

We are still in touch

They come to visit all the time

I go to visit

It almost [has] held us together

The friendship

It's like the experience

. . .

But that definitely tells you how the system works,

. . .

Actually if you could control people and leadership and things like that

And that's why the Americans were afraid,

That's why they invaded Grenada.

. . .

That's why.

But then it had a big impact on who I am

You know

Although,

You know in terms of the person I am

I was flabbergasted with what I was hearing because during this time to which she is referring I was living in Canada. I obviously was not getting all the details about what was happening in Grenada. In terms of culture and politics, this incident definitely informs Ursula's cultural identity, development, and memory, and as she says, these experiences make her the person that she is now. I thus decided to let the conversation flow and my tape run. I resumed with the following question:

[So where did you get organized to learn to shoot then, did you have to go . . .?]

There were training camps

[In Grenada, for you to go and learn to shoot!]

Yes.

[Did they come and pick you up, or did you have to go and find your way there or what?]

They picked you up

And a lot

Were teachers and community leaders

They were people who were passionate about the changes.

[Yes.]

That was happening

And you know

And in hind sight

You think about it

Sometimes I think "How the hell did they find me"

[She laughs]

But then as you get older

You realize it must have been teachers,

The people you talk to

Who knew what you were thinking

How you felt about things,

And even in school

I was on the student council.

So I was always politicized

[Did you express this political-ness in your writings when you did your assignments in school?]

Yes I did to some extent.

And I remember actually a teacher telling me

He did not think it was a good idea.

This teacher now lives in New York

And it is really quite funny

And I think in a sense he was trying to protect me.

[Oh yes]

Because I remember

Horace [pseudonym] is his name

[H-O-R-A-C-E]

Him telling me

He respected my views

But that,

I can't remember

How he put it

But he did not think it was probably the best place

To make those views known.

[Oh is that right, . . . wow! I can't believe it!]

It was pretty heavy stuff because

Even now sometimes I feel

You know

Like

But what it has taught me

Is responsibility for community

And the importance of being part of the community

Giving

Because you are taking

And those are the things

That they pretty well taught you

That you have a responsibility to build the country that you want

And that you can do it

And the importance of voting

Those are the kind of things

And I remember they had lots of student rallies,

And conferences

And that kind of stuff

[Is that right]

Oh yes

Lots

And it was mostly the teacher colleges and high schools

Those were a big part of it

[So how long did this period last?]

Well as I said

We moved here in 1978.

And I finished high school here,

I was in the middle of form 6 when we moved.

That was '78.

And I think it was in '82 that we had the invasion.

[So you were in the beginning?]

In the beginning

[Wow, that's fascinating]

It is

It is really, really interesting

You know up to the other day

I was searching

I always kept a diary

[Do you still have it?]

Yes I do

And I haven't gone back to some of it yet

And that's one thing

My dad always journaled too,

And even some of the people

Like Maurice and stuff some of his writings and stuff

I have it in my diary.

[Oh my God]

I was very surprised to hear Ursula's account of her senior education in the Caribbean. First, the thought of her wearing her school uniform to these events and not caring who saw her in it was something I would have never believed before hearing her account. We were taught to respect the school uniform. Second, the thought of her being trained to use a gun in such a subversive activity is also unbelievable. Culturally, we are supposed to be fun loving and carefree. Palmer (2006) quotes Williams as saying, "the popular imagination [is] 'a picture of fun-loving people, . . . a place for tourist, a place where you could . . . walk half-naked on the beaches, a place where you do nothing but drink rum punches and forget" (p. 19). Ursula's experience articulates a nation that was seeking changes in their living conditions. The people were prepared to allow the New

Jewel Movement to govern the country. Although we were politically conscious, democracy was something the British drummed into us so the thought of insurrection being taken to the schools was unbelievable. In the case of Grenada, however, many political opponents critiqued Prime Minister Eric Gairy's neo-colonial policies as allegedly they upheld education as "a *commodity* [author's emphasis] to be bought and sold" (Creft, 1982, p. 49). Other Caribbean citizens assessed their governments' policies as ones which advocated free education for all. The Revolutionary Government of Grenada felt Grenada's "sixty-five primary school buildings were in a dilapidated condition. Classrooms were overcrowded, furniture and teaching aids [were] virtually non-existent in many schools, [and] approximately two-thirds of the teaching staff [were] untrained at the time of the Revolution" (Bishop, 1982, p. 30). Thus this group elicited and received public support by claiming:

> The main cry of our people and the trust of our people's new vision was [sic] for mass education at all levels to counter the elitism and exclusiveness of colonial education. The goals of mass education are to develop in our people those very qualities and skills which colonial education had attempted to crush and destroy. *Firstly* [author's emphasis] the new education aims to develop in *all* our people, not just a few, the self-knowledge and self confidence which will motivate them to make important decisions about, and participate fully in their country's development. (Creft, 1982, pp. 51–52)

Their passionate appeals were heard by school children such as Ursula who participated in many public rallies in support of a governmental change.

Critical Discussion during the Focus Group

When we got together for the focus group session we returned to the colonialism theme when Pamela started to recite a poem she remembered from her school days. After Pamela's recitation, we talked about the meaning and she commented on the presumptions the poet made in his assumptions of the Aboriginal people he found there. Next Lance recited his poem with all the pomp and arrogance the poem suggested. "I am monarch of all I survey" is the first line. He said that many times when he recited this poem he would jump onto a chair to do it, and his wife concurred. The other participants chided him and inquired why he had such a passion for the poem. He replied that it was perhaps because his teacher explained the poems that he taught very well. Rosemary said that she could not remember any poems she learned because she never liked them, suggesting that perhaps the links this genre had to colonialism accounted for her dislike of it. At this point Ursula suggested that she too did not remember any of her poems and this too was perhaps because she associated it with colonialism. We talked about colonialism and Caribbean education, and I felt certain that sometime during this conversation Ursula would tell the group what we shared about colonialism in our individual conversation. At one point during the conversation I almost broached the topic but decided to wait and let her raise it, but she never did. What she revealed to me started off quite innocently and in trying to present it in this paper I had to reflect on Darder's (1991) application of resistance to contest the hegemony that exists in society and schools. She writes "hegemony must constantly be fought for to be maintained [as] it is not something that simply consists of the projection of the ideas of the dominant classes into the heads of the subordinate classes" (p. 42).

As Ursula began this part of the discussion, she had trouble recalling any poems. She was the one who was most profoundly affected by colonial resistance. She said:

You know it is interesting that you guys should say this
And I am remembering it now
But it is almost [like]
It killed that part of me.
I think with my experience in colonialism
It was a period I hated.
I resent it until now
The other day my kids were saying to me
Because you know
We go window shopping
And stuff
And I always go into the Bombay Company [a store in West Edmonton that specializes in Colonial style furniture]
And you know
And I have never purchased anything there
And my daughter says to me
Mom, you always come in here
And it seem like it is a love-hate relationship.

It reminds me of that time

And I think I don't want to be part of this.

You know there is the attraction

But you know

it also repels, and that's how I feel

Rosemary added this to the conversation:

You have a sister right here.

Poetry

We had to learn

And stand in front of the school, class

And say,

I rebelled.

I think I learned one poem

And I would say it every time

And I don't remember it.

Pamela added this:

Right

Ursula continued:

And as you are saying it

And I am saying

Why don't I remember it

Rosemary added:

I could write poetry
Now if I wanted to
But to learn it,
Forget it.

Lance's experience was different as he believed his teacher was teaching him to express himself. His teacher took them outside, thus incorporating other pedagogical ideas as part of his hidden curriculum. Lance thus said:

Didn't they teach you to be able to express yourself
To be able to stand up in front of a group and express yourself
That's what I got from it.

Rosemary countered with this:

I don't think I wanted to do that
Probably
Probably not

As Lance reveals by the following statement, perhaps the pedagogy of having the students study under a tree goes back to this place as being an indigenous learning site for young boys, so he got more from his poetry learning experiences. He suggested the experience allowed him to explore masculinity. He said:

Well a lot of times
I find myself jumping on a chair or a table
And reciting

At which point Pamela remarked:

A sense of drama

Storytelling

She continued:

Yes, I know

And that is some of what Sparrow talked about in his Calypso

Where some of the things we learned didn't make sense to us

So there is that aspect of it too.

Well you know what the colonialist did

You did not feel good about yourself

Because you are trying to attain to a standard,

Rosemary then added:

You are reading this thing

And I don't think you actually get an interpretation of what you are actually learning

And that was what was most troubling.

If I don't understand what I am learning

You could teach me from here to wherever

Pamela added:

You could not relate to it.

And Lance surmised:

I think that was the difference

Because I had a teacher

Who took the time to explain these things to us

Because I felt that my participants were alluding to the idea that most of their resistance to the poems centred on the effects of colonialism, I asked the next question:

> *[You mentioned about colonialism, what did colonialism do to us? What did colonialism do to us, just for the sake of clarification?]*

To which Pamela responded:

> *Well it caused us to want to value,*
> *To place a high value on something outside,*
> *To be specific,*
> *For instance*
> *British colonialism*
> *I mean*
> *We want to value what the British did*
> *And it sort of*
> *Well our own beliefs*
> *And what was our culture to that point*
> *We sort of put it into the background*
> *And made to feel that was inferior,*
> *And so you inspire,*
> *I think Merle Hodge [a Caribbean educator & writer] wrote a book or story,*
> *She lived with an aunt in the countryside,*
> *I don't know, just sort of a natural lifestyle*

And then she had an aunt who lived in town who had all these cultivated manners

More than theirs

And she went to live with her

And there was this pull and tug,

Like you are aspiring to be like the British

But of course

Well then

Only to realize

That is sort of a no-man's land,

Errol adds

You are lost now.

And Pamela continues:

Because the British people are really not going to,

You are second class,

You are not going to be accepted,

You are almost like a buffoon,

So you kind of lose your identity

"Who am I?"

You no longer can be

Hmm

This child of the soil

You can't really identify with them,

> *So you are in a no man's land.*

And Ursula added:

> *You are lost now.*

Rosemary continued:

> *Because you meet people*
>
> *And they ask you*
>
> *Well, where you are from?*
>
> *And you tell them I am from Tobago and Trinidad,*
>
> *And they want to know*
>
> *If you speak English there*
>
> *And the first thing that comes to your mouth*
>
> *Well we were governed by the English*
>
> *The English speakers*

Pamela said:

> *We were subjects*

Rosemary continued:

> *That's what we are*
>
> *That's how we come . . .*
>
> *Or we might have been*
>
> *Speaking some other tribal language*
>
> *From whatever place we had come from*
>
> *Here you are talking*

About having your tea

All these little things

These idiosyncratic things that you pick up British-wise,

You do it

You use it

You go to church,

Look at the way you dress

You might wear gloves

In a hot climate

Caribbean

With so much sun

From this discussion I gathered that my research participants questioned the Caribbean education received during the colonial era. The discussion also highlighted their ambivalence or a sort of love-hate relationship that transpired between them and the education that they received. Many other West Indian theorists, such as C. L. R. James (1983) and Eric Williams (1962), have also registered their ambivalence with our Caribbean educational system. In the discussion section of this dissertation, my aim will be to draw on some of my participants' dialogues to unfold the educational discourse and to demonstrate how education was taken up in the Caribbean as an emancipatory tool in an effort to foster political awareness, as well as social and cultural and economic development.

Calypso as Informal Pedagogy

One question that may be asked at this point is whether there were other influences in some of the participants' lives that have accounted for their anti-colonial rhetoric and stance. Fortunately, Caribbean students were exposed to another pedagogy which provided some balance to some of the information and knowledge that was taught in school.

One has to look at the other form of public pedagogy which influenced the lives of most people from the Caribbean. This is our calypso music which, although defined as "the music and rhythm that is native to Trinidad" (Martin, 1998, p. 223), actually is closely related to the West African "call-and-response pattern" (Liverpool, 1998, p. 31) genre of music and is used for "edification or self-knowledge" (Rohlehr, 1998, p. 82). Like many of the research participants have stressed, I too was exposed to British poems, especially those of Captain James Oliver Cutteridge in his *West Indian Readers*. Johnson (2000) writes: "Cutteridge arrived in 1921 to reform the education system, and as principal of Tranquility [School, in Port of Spain], he began by expanding the curriculum. He was particularly big on drawing, at which he was proficient, and which he thought developed observation, dexterity and intelligence" (p. 3). He also expanded the curriculum to include French, the Cadet Corps, school cap, and badge. In that same article Johnson adds that in 1923, Cutteridge was promoted to Assistant Director of Education. Cutteridge wrote poems such as "Dan is the Man in the Van," "Mr. Mike Went to School on a Bike," and "Twisty and Twirly were Two Screws." *Dan is the Man in the Van* is a calypso sung by Slinger Francisco, or Mighty Sparrow that parodies the

British-influenced education. Here is an example of the critique of the poems the British system taught us.

> According to the education you get when you small
> You'll grow up with true ambition and respect from one and all
> . . .
> The things they teach me I should be a block-headed mule.
> . . .
> They beat me like a dog to learn that in school;
> . . . (Slinger, 1963)

This calypso provided some balance to what was taught in school and it was just as well known by most school children. In true African "call-and-response pattern" this calypso provides a response to what was taught in school. The author of this calypso deconstructs poems and in a genre and language that are in the voice of the people. Everyone immediately grasps the fact that a critique of the poems that were taught is exemplified in the calypso and that the education is worth challenging. The challenge to proper English is also embedded in the calypso: "They beat me like a dog to learn that in school; if me head was bright I would' a be a damn fool." Writing into the discourse that is a "dialects of English" in fact promotes the validity of this genre of the language because, after all, if the content of the poems is questionable, then the language structure is also worth questioning. Language usage is very significant in master-slave relationships, because there was sometimes the need for private conversations outside the earshot of the master. Cudjoe (1993) writes of the need for people in the Caribbean to use language in their daily lives "to enable them to cope with the historic conditions of oppression and the irritations of the present day that attend their lives" (p. 36). The coded semiotics embedded in conversations could not be deciphered by their slave masters and nuances or derivatives of these have been passed down through history. Young (2001) in acknowledging the "ideal of universal humanity" (p. 203) predicated on the notion of a status of differentiation, states that genres of discourse as portrayed in the calypso "Dan is the Man in the Van" (Slinger, 1963) are efforts to "assert the specificity of . . . [one's] own culture, political organization, and goals" (p. 203). In making her claim, she contends that: "Linguist theorists asserted that Black English is English differently constructed, not bad English, and Black poets and novelists exploited and explored its particular nuances" (p. 204).

Any analysis of education during the colonial era will have to include an analysis of popular pedagogical education. In the political arena popular pedagogical education was also important as research participant Lance mentions in his conversation:

> *Well I grew up in several different villages, I helped form a soccer club, I was a member of the People's National Movement Youth Group*
>
> (Personal communication, July, 2004)

This statement on the surface can be read as a young person who is a member of the youth wing of a political party. However in the context of colonialism and with a People's National Movement (PNM) platform of public political education (Williams, 1962) and education for all students (Cudjoe, 1993), Lance's statement takes on more meaning. I will elaborate further on the use of public education later in the chapter. What is also significant about his statement is that the leader of the PNM would always use the informal dialect as metaphorical "hooks" to politically educate the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean. In his speech titled "Massa Day Done" (cited in Cudjoe, 1993) which was made at the dawn of independence of Trinidad and Tobago, he continuously references this statement, exemplifying the use of the language of the people in this public pedagogy practice. The statement "Massa Day Done" is meant to refer to that period after emancipation when slaves were free and not under the jurisdiction or ownership of their plantation bosses. This phrase represents the freedom to choose one's own destiny and was thus used to inform people in the Caribbean about the rights and responsibilities of becoming an independent nation void of colonial rule.

The main purpose of calypsos, in the context of the Caribbean, is to educate the listeners as a form of cultural pedagogy. So while "Dan is the Man in the Van" may seem like a funny ditty, it actually educated the public, even those who could not read, about the work students were studying at school. It should be emphasized that many of the colonial concepts and themes mentioned in those "nonsense" rhymes were irrelevant to the lives of those who were learning them.

As far as my research participants were concerned, this aspect of colonial education made a profound impact on their views of education and this is the impression they give in the following dialogue during the focus group discussion. As Pamela says:

> *That is some of what Sparrow talked about in his calypso,*
> *Where some of the things we learned didn't make sense to us*
> *So there is that aspect of it too*

Well, you know what the colonialist did

You did not feel good about yourself because you are attaining a standard

that is not attainable

Rosemary adds her critical voice to demonstrate she did not agree with what was being taught, based on her understanding of her reality. This critique is captured with the dialogue between Pamela, Rosemary and Errol on pages 234 to 235 of this chapter.

"Discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies and the constructive effects discourses have upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 12). As Ursula, Pamela and Rosemary indicate with their statements, the discourses of the colonial poems have affected them negatively and in ways that they have not dealt with even as adults today. Ursula cannot express why she goes to the store, Bombay Bazaar (a colonial style store) and does not purchase anything. The troubling experience is transmitted to her children as she admits that her children question her love-hate relationship with these relics of her past. Ursula also admits that she has no answers for her children's questions.

In a sense this is also the "double-consciousness" (p. 8) that DuBois (1990) articulates. And further evidence of this double-consciousness is in the speech patterns of the discourse. Although they were reciting the poems with proper English diction and style, the speakers immediately reverted to their own conversation style to continue the dialogue. I myself recognized the nuanced language only after I had listened to the tapes several times.

Looking at the Text: To Educate is to Emancipate

In the previous section, I peeled off the outer layer of my research participants' cultural educational discourse to reveal some dissonance with the formal education they received in the Caribbean. In this section I will peel off another layer and critically analyze the role of education in the development of political awareness. Education as a tool for political awareness was another theme that emerged from the data three times during my data collection phase. As I mentioned earlier in the discussion, the first theme I analyzed dealt with Lance, who spoke about his experience at the People's National Movement party's youth camps. In the following dialogue, Errol spoke about his experience with one of his teachers who later became the prime minister of St. Vincent. As he said his teacher wanted better opportunities for the people in St. Vincent and spoke about this, but the British, who governed the islands, branded him a communist.

[J: Did you all go on a hike?]

Errol's response was:

Yes, groups of guys from school went

Because of the Anglican Church

The Anglican Church

We just had to come to the Anglican Church in Bequia

And they had a big hall

And we used that

And that's how we got around

We just went from school to school to school

We did not have to pay anything

We just got to the school

And they would open the school

And we took our blanket down there,

And we spend two days or how many ever days

And you moved on.

. . .

[J: So who did the organizing for this group of guys to go hiking?]

Oh, the teachers.

[J: Oh the teachers did?]

Yes the teachers did

Actually this guy who was involved with us

He is the Premier right now in St. Vincent.

[J: Oh is that right]

Ralph Gonsalves[7]*?*

[J: Oh yes.]

Yes, he taught at my school

Bishop's College, Georgetown

He organized cricket, a lot of cricket matches against people in Kingstown

We would get all these guys and teams coming up to play cricket with us

Or he would organize team matches with people around [the community]

And actually one of our big teams would play cricket with us too

What happened is that he had just finished going to school

And I think he had gotten seven or eight GCE courses

And he was just teaching for a while

And he went to university

He was not there when we went to Bequia, but he was the one who was there when we went around the island.

He went away after that

He went to UWI [The University of the West Indies] Jamaica.

In those days we had those kinds of communism

And this kind of ism

And this kind of socialism

And that was very big

And people talking about this new system

And that this democracy thing was not the greatest

And this would be better, by the people and for the people,

---

[7] Ralph Gonsalves was UWI Student Guild President in 1968. He was a Rhodes Scholar, later Lecturer at

And those were the heroes

And all of a sudden in the islands they have this notion they call it communist

And that is a very dirty word.

[J: Is that right?]

Right, if you are a communist that's a dirty word, right

And that came down from British people and so forth.

But it is smart people

These are the smart people who say let's look at this other idea,

Look at this one, and look at that one

And those days Russia was doing good, powerful and so forth.

So when we look at the –isims, socialism

And people started reading different books and so forth

So he was like that, he was into that a lot

And they branded him as a socialist and a communist

So the people who were voting in the islands now,

Everybody is not educated

And all they know is this guy is a communist; then he is bad

So he did not get off his foot until late because of the way he was treated

But when he was talking on interviews on TV

And so forth

UWI in Politics, switched to Law and is now Leader of the Opposition in his native St Vincent.

> *And he would talk this way about policies and so forth*
>
> *He just won for the first time.*

Discrediting community leaders and branding them communist was a common practice in the Caribbean from the 1960s as the Caribbean countries sought independence from Britain. I will critically analyze two of my participants' conversations in conjunction with some of the speeches of the political leaders to explore the public pedagogy that was incorporated into the educational experiences of the adults in my research. I hope to show how the experiences received from these encounters affected how the two research participants constructed their own children's education.

> *[J: So going back now to your Caribbean culture; tell me about your Caribbean culture.]*
>
> *Lance: Well I grew up in several different villages*
>
> *I helped form a soccer club, I was a member of the People's National Movement Youth Group.*
>
> *J: Oh were you?*
>
> *Lance: And that allowed me to go to the youth camp where they taught a trade. There were like 150 guys from all over Trinidad and Tobago, so for me that was fun to meet people from all different areas of Trinidad and Tobago. In regards to the authority I didn't get along well with authority. When people say I can't do this or I can't do that, I never did go along with that. I remember one instance where on the youth camp we had what you call rounds, like round A, round B, round C and so on. And like Monday, round A will do the dishes, round B will*

> *probably look after the cooking and stuff like that, and help with the cooking and stuff like that, round C will clean up around the camp, round D will look after agriculture, and stuff like that.*

The previous dialogue outlines the experience Lance had at a youth camp. The youth camp was developed by the People's National Movement for male youth who were no longer at school because of lack of finance or lack of school placement. The young men in this camp were taught practical skills and received leadership training. This pedagogical training was in keeping with one of the aims of the PNM in preparing the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to take over the development of the country.

Concluding Perspectives

The period my research participants reflect on about their education was a time when the Caribbean region was undergoing political change. During the late '50s and through the decade of the 1960s the region emerged from colonial rule and looked towards political independence from Britain. Scholars such as C. L. R. James (1969) and Dr. Eric Williams (1962, & 1993; Cudjoe, 1993; Lamming, 1995), and others had the vision to educate the people in this area so that they could assume political power; thus, they engaged in a mission exemplified as public pedagogy. The outcomes of their missions were evident in the discussions I had with my research participants. Although I note that there were many Black emancipators in the Caribbean I have chosen to emphasize two: Dr. Eric Williams and Maurice Bishop, as they were the two individuals who my research participants mentioned. Eric E. Williams and The People's National

Movement were very influential from 1955 to 1981 (Cudjoe, 1993), and Maurice Bishop and The New Jewel Movement (NJM) were prominent from 1973 to 1983 (Wikipedia—The Free Encyclopedia, 2006; Speeches by Maurice Bishop, 1982). Once again the cultural identity model theorizes my research participants lived school experiences. Research participants' engagement in the political structures influenced the degree with which they viewed education as a political act. As hooks (1994) writes: "For black folks, teaching—educating—was fundamentally political because it was rooted in antiracist struggle [and] schools became the locations where . . . [students] experiences learning as revolution" (p. 2). Those students who were schooled during the epoch of Eric Williams(1962), C.L. R. James (1963/2002), and other colonial resistors, viewed education in terms of an anti-colonial struggle for political independence. Others, who were schooled during the Maurice Bishop era, viewed education as a counter hegemonic political act. In effect, Ursula's active approach to engaging Edmonton's school system is attributable to her militant school experience. Likewise the others' less active approach may be due to a cultural identity that is forged by a non-violent "revolutionary pedagogy" (hooks, 1994, p. 2).

CHAPTER SIX:

Parental Perspectives of their Children's Education

Introduction

In Chapter Six, where the names of institutions and individuals are fictitious, I will focus on the parental conversations about their children's experiences in Edmonton's schools. Three of the five parental groups educated both boys and girls in the system while the two others had two girls each who followed the same course. This variance allows me to provide perspectives on what it is like to educate both boys and girls of Caribbean heritage. Four families sent their children to the public and catholic schools, while one parent shopped around and chose to send her children to a variety of schools. These included the charter, public and catholic school systems. I was therefore able to glean an understanding of schooling in the various jurisdictions.

"Do I Hear the R-word Here? Facing and Dealing with Racism in School

The ADD case: Teacher's Perceptions

Many times "racism, prejudice, stereotyping and other negative attitudes and actions are sourced in ignorance, avoidance, fear and discomfort with people who are different and whom we might not know" (James, 2003, p. 159). Ursula's comments about her son describe situations that Caribbean Canadian parents and their children frequently experience (James & Brathwaite, 1996) in schools.

[J: Okay please tell me about your educational experiences with your children in Edmonton.]

Ursula: Well with Eaton [pseudonym, Ursula's son]
I started in the Catholic school system
And we got out of that really quick
And the reason for it,
Well to start with
Eaton was a very active child
And he got into a lot of trouble
And ah,
One teacher
To put it briefly she thought my child was ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder syndrome]
And of course
It is my first born
And
I got really ticked
And
ADD
Oh my God
What's happening here
We have a really good paediatrician

And first they wanted to have him tested at the school

And I said: you know what

I don't think you people are qualified to do that

So they were ticked off with me for that

So I went to the paediatrician

And he said to me

And the first thing he said to me

And he [the paediatrician] is Jewish,

He said to me

I don't think Eaton has a problem

I said but the teacher says: "We wanted him tested"

And he [the paediatrician] said to me "Am I hearing the R-word [racism] here?"

And I said: "I don't know"

But I still want him tested

So he had a psychologist test him

And he achieved way above average for his age

So when I went back to the school

I said: "You know what

My son does not have anything [wrong with him]"

So they wanted a copy of the report

And pretty well the paediatrician gave me his business card

And said: "You tell that principal to contact me because he does not have
the qualifications to read that report
And
But I thought because of the perception already
You know what
As much as I do not want to change
My son is not going to be the statistic
So we moved him to a different Catholic school
Because I was under the impression
That the Catholic school had the discipline
And to me
Coming from where I knew that discipline was important
You know
So we took him to another Catholic school

James (2003) believes behaviours such as the ones Ursula describes are "informed by structural factors represented and disseminated by educational, religious, social and governmental institutions, including the media and the judicial system" (p.159). Fortunately, in this case, she sought the opinion of her doctor who used scientific analysis to dispel the prevailing myths. The principal's stereotypical and prejudicial attitudes clouded his vision, which would have allowed him to understand Ursula's son as an over active child, and her needs or desires for her son. Thus he failed to discern her approach to education; instead he focused on unfounded suppositions, which highlighted his prejudice. Alice shared similar experiences about her children's public school education.

> *[J: So. With respect to your children, . . . when they sit around the dinner table and you engage them in any type of conversation with respect to their school, what do they say?]*
>
> *They don't like it*
> *They don't like their teachers*
> *I am always up at the school*
> *And the school they [now] go to is a Catholic school*
> *Because I had problems with the public school*
> *And there is a lot of bias*
> *I don't like to say the word racial discrimination*
> *But there is*
> *There are problems over large classroom size*
> *The teacher just shuffles them along*
> *You know*
> *They don't take the time with each student's needs*
> *You find some teachers that are good*
> *And then there are others who are there for the almighty dollar*
> *So they [my children] complain about their teacher [who they believe] is racist*
> *My teacher does this*

> *My teacher does that*
>
> *So they complain*
>
> *[J: So when you probe them about this, what do they say*
>
> *For example when they say: my teacher is racist what specifically are they talking about?]*
>
> *Well it's a lot of*
>
> *Like for instance there will be a teacher saying*
>
> *Well there are so many others, there are other Black students in the class who are not doing as well [as you]. Why are you doing so well?*
>
> *They class all Black kids in the same category which they are not supposed to do*
>
> *But then when you turn around and confront them about it they deny it and say:*
>
> *Oh well she misunderstood [me]*
>
> *And you know they cover it up because they don't think you would come and complain. Some of them know me [but] the newer teachers do not know me*
>
> *They are getting to know me*
>
> *So I have got a reputation already*

Here again is another parent who complains because the teachers do not recognize her children's abilities. According to this account, the teachers stereotyped her children as academic failures based on the perceived behaviours of other students of similar racial background.

As I read through these parents' comments, I deduced that these teachers held negative opinions about their Caribbean Canadian students and these negative opinions were based on general impressions. Analyzed further, their comments revealed teachers who passed these negative impressions onto the students such attitudes could very well have affected the students' self-esteem. Parents were now challenged to counteract the power inscribed and embedded in teachers' opinions and voices, to boost their children's self-esteem, to convince their children to respect their elders, and to convince their children to trust the authority of their teachers. Denial of behaviours attributed as racist was another contention supported by the parents' statements. James (2003) insists:

> people must admit that prejudice and racism exists if they are going to deal with these issues. . . . Critical and painful self analysis and self-awareness appear to be prerequisites for working towards confronting and overcoming . . . racism, prejudice and . . . [the] accompanying problems. (pp. 159–160)

The parents' remarks point to a need for teacher training in the areas James (2003) points out.

If these are the individual experiences of parents of Caribbean Canadian heritage, then how much effort do teachers put into ensuring the success of Caribbean Canadian children? This question is important to ask because here we see two parents using their initiative to interrupt the prevailing failure-discourse. Both parents wish teachers would recognize the individual nature of their children and identify a lack of recognition as a form of racial discrimination. Shopping around for schools that recognize the individuality of their children is part of the education experiences of people of Caribbean Canadian heritage.

A matter for investigation is: To what extent do parents of Caribbean Canadian heritage, such as Ursula and Alice and the Caribbean Canadian community, engage educators with these concerns in Edmonton's schools? As well, whom do they turn to for support in approaching educators when they feel they are being treated unfairly? And, are other parents with similar school experiences, too intimidated by educational structures to question teachers' decisions and authorities?

Parent-Teacher Interviews and Lack of Recognition

Parents sometimes complained that teachers stereotyped their children even when the parents have made efforts to help their children succeed in school. In the following conversation, Alice addressed this stereotyping. Alice sought extra-curricula help for her children to succeed at school. Parents in Black communities have often utilized these programs where they are available (Brathwaite, 1996). Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage (CCACH) offers Saturday classes for students in the Caribbean Community. While this extra schooling may have contributed to school success, youths are still stigmatized and scrutinized for their performance in school. As this experience was similar to my own with my children, I probed Alice further. She shared the following backlash she and her daughter experienced, because she wanted her daughter to be successful.

> *[J: Okay, so what have you done for your children [to provide] that perception about they doing so well compared to other Black students.]*
>
> *I am up in the school*

I am always in the school,
They know who I am
I make complaints, not just to the teachers,
I pull them out of classes if I really dislike the teacher,
I dislike what is going on
And I am not willing to tolerate this with my oldest daughter
And I said that I demand that she be changed from this class,
because I don't like what was going on
[J: What specifically are you speaking about that was going on?]
Oh well, I went to a parent-teacher interview and we got in there
And she [the teacher said: Monica, show,
Just show your Mom what you did
Another parent came in with her child, she got up from her seat, was busy
with this person
Talking to them and everything,
[And] they [eventually] left,
We are still sitting there,
And another parent came in,
She has not yet approached me, P
[The teacher says:] Monica you are not supposed to do that
Monica was just showing me what they do on the board
You are not supposed to be writing on the board

But this is what we do on the board, you know

And it's like she picked on everything Monica was doing

But Monica was not doing anything wrong

And she did not come and say

You know this is where she needs to improve; this is what she is having difficulty with

And you know we were there for about forty-five minutes

And I was there waiting, [thinking] are you going to come

You know, so I got up and I said

Is there anything that I need to know about Monica

And she said oh she is fine, like she really did not want to have any conversation with me.

Like

[Monica] she is a student in the classroom

And [I felt she was acting as though] she did not want to have her in the classroom

And so that was a Thursday

Monica took the day [Friday] off

And I phoned the school, and I told the principal what went on [took place]

And I that I wasn't impressed

This is not the first child I have in school

My sister is two years older than my kids

I had to go to a couple of her interviews,

I had to go to my son's,

Now my daughter is being treated like this

I said I have never been so disrespected in my life

And I said that on Monday when Monica comes to school I want her out of that class

And placed into another class

The principal's response to her request was:

Oh the other class is full

To this she responded:

I said I don't care how full that class is

I don't want her in the class she is in now

And I think it was a split class that they were going to put her in

And I said put her in [it]

she will be fine,

Because her marks went from an AB student to a D

And that was like at the first parent–teacher interview

I asked my question in an effort to understand how our children interpret other school experiences, such as parent-teacher communications.

[J: So when all this was taking place [at the parent-teacher interview] was Monica in the room with you?]

Yes

[J: And so, she observed what was happening?]

Yes

[J: Did she say any thing about it after?]

She said, you see how she is mom,

You know

That kind of a thing,

So like it proved that the child was right

[J: Was this why she did not go to school the next day]?

[She was just not feeling well,

but I just said no you stay home and I am contacting the school

And I said no I don't appreciate how she treated me and Monica for a parent-teacher interview

[J: So what did Monica say after she changed?]

Once she changed she was fine

The class was fine after that

[J: And what did she say to you about the action you took?]

She was glad, she wasn't happy in that class

(Alice, personal communication, July 20, 2004)

Problems may occur when individuals contest space; however, my research participants all related systemic problems that could be attributed to their lack of recognition in the school system.

Caribbean-Canadian Youths Dealing with Bullying: An Issue of Racism

Racist incidents were not only identified with teacher-student relationships, but also between student interchanges. Remarkably, these were identified with Caribbean Canadian children at ages where they were not aware of skin colour or racist innuendoes and terms. As the following section points out, a change of schools should have brought an end to the problems the family was experiencing in trying to have an education that focuses on achievement, but this was not the case. Now the problems are more personal attacks and it appears that these intensify as the children grow older. Or, perhaps the racial slurs are present, but confrontation occurs only when the victim begins to differentiate that these messages are not transferable and in fact they have racialized overtones.

And here it was an issue of racism
And it's quite funny
Because by then there was Anita [Eaton's younger sister] getting into the school system now too
My second [child]
And Eaton would get into fights
He would beat them up
You call him the N-word and he would beat them up
You call him the N-word and he would punch you
And so he ends up in the principal's office

And he says what happened

And he [Eaton] said: "he called me the N-word and I punched him"

He is the one getting in trouble, not the person who called him the N-word

And the principal was not willing to do anything about it

He said he could not change the way people live

That was his response to it

So I remember getting frustrated

Not sure how am I going to deal with this

And I remember talking to my little daughter saying:

"How come you are never complaining about stuff?

And Eaton is always getting into trouble

And she says: Oh mom.

So I said to her: "Has anybody ever called you the N-word?"

She says: "All the time"

And I said: "How come you never told me?"

"Why didn't you do anything?"

She said: "But isn't it like the F-word?

She thought it was like the F-word

So when they tell her that, she says: "same to you"

[Laughter]

So all this time she thought it was like the "F-word"

So she just told them same to you.

So I said: "What did they do when you say that?"

And she says: "They just look at me really funny."

So anyway, we pulled them [from that school]

In this conversation Ursula described a school principal who felt the victim of bullying and name calling was the one who should be chastised. Students who do not get the support from elders in solving bullying problems have the tendency of trying to solve the bullying problem themselves (Wosnack & Waring, 2000). According to Ursula's comments, the principal did not assume the responsibility incumbent with his role. Instead of seizing the opportunity to demonstrate leadership and educate his students about appropriate values and behaviour, he chose to shift the blame onto society and in so doing abdicated his responsibility. My expectations, though, may be unrealistic, because as Greene (1978) writes: "I am not sure why so many kinds of people believed for so long that the school had the power to cure fundamental social ills" (p. 91). Anyway, by responding in this manner, the principal condones the bullies' actions, encourages them to continue their behaviours, and does not see himself as being capable of curing some of society's ills. Other research participants commented on similar experiences.

Self-Actualization and the Caribbean Canadian Youth

Teachers tend not to focus on helping Caribbean Canadian youth to achieve their maximum potential. There is a tendency to view these youth as the ones who would never attend post-secondary institutions. This belief was corroborated during my conversation with Alice.

I find in the High School . . . they do not enforce the 30-level subjects

[J: The ones that would get you into University]

[That is] right

He will just take the 33's [the 33-level courses]

[This is] just to get [him] out of school

[So as] not to accomplish anything past high school

So when you get out of high school you cannot get anywhere with the subjects that they have forced you to take in high school

You can't go and get anything with some of the subjects that they are making the kids take

So I learn that

And with Theresa [Alice's child]

I have said

You are not taking any 12-'s or whatever 13-'s

You are taking all 30-level subjects.

[J: The 10-, 20-, 30-level courses?]

Right, I don't want you taking 14 or whatever other levels they have

You take the subjects [that will fulfill the requirements for post-secondary education]

Because you cannot [pursue a post-secondary education with those]...,

When you come out [of the secondary school system] you are going to end up going back to school to get it [the 30-level courses] anywhere

So just do it and get it over with

But you see they did not encourage my son into that

They did not even tell me about it [the consequences of doing the 13- and 15-level courses]

(Alice, personal communication, July 20, 2004)

The frustration of Alice's experience is obvious in this transcript. Many Caribbean Canadian parents are not educated as to the courses needed to pursue post-secondary education. Instead students are allowed to pursue 13-, 23- and 33-level courses. Coming into this school system with the previous Caribbean cultural experience of teachers, who take an integral interest in the students and feel responsible for helping the children to self-actualize, these parents sometimes discover, after the damage has already been done, that this cultural attribute does not exist in the school system for their children. Students who return to school to upgrade their education after graduation are sometimes included with those who dropped out of school, and are considered to be "at-risk" youths. However, many Canadian Caribbean parents believe these youths should be considered as those who were pushed through schools to supply the economy with a potential pool of workers for dead-end jobs. Educators should be aware that many Caribbean Canadian parents do not have the benefit of an education under the system by which their children are now being educated. Thus, it is incumbent on school systems to avail parents in their jurisdiction of this knowledge so they can work with their children to help them make informed decisions about their future aspirations. As Alice points out:

The schools never educated you [the family] about their system

Once you leave high school and you have taken those 33-level courses

They are not transferable

You want this [course as a prerequisite] in order to do this course in university

Or to go into this field

So they should not be encouraging the children [to take those 33-level courses]

[They say:] You are not as smart as the other kids, so just do this

They should be pushing the kids

[They should be saying:] In order to do basketball you need to have this grade average

So as to make the kids do better

Instead they put them into a lower subject [level]

And they are getting by on that

So then they could do the sports

They don't encourage them to work harder

So I find too many kids are slipping through the cracks

Because they give them too many unnecessary options

Too much choices and then they take the least [difficult] of these choices

But I remember in the Caribbean you don't automatically go on

You earn your grades

You don't just get passed on [moved along]

Shuffled along

(Alice, personal communication, July 20, 2004)

As I continued this conversation I felt as though Alice would have benefited from school counselling where she was viewed as a stakeholder in her son's education and future so she could have the option of partnering with a school counsellor to provide the education her son needed.

[J: What kind of schooling do you feel would have been beneficial to you in the long run?]

They alone know
You see because the kids are so stubborn and lazy
So they say, "I pass and who cares"
And the teachers pass them [give them a passing mark] and who cares
Somebody else's problem
That's how it is
Someone else's problem

[An expression of sad realization and frustration]

[J: So now reflecting on all this, what does your son say? Has he said anything to you?]

No, he is kind of a lazy sort like that
Like he focuses on his sports which I try to get him not to focus on
But then he was not being encouraged
You could do this and you could do that with this [course].
And you try to tell him this
But they are telling him something else, you know,

I mean I have been up to the school, like I am saying, you know,
But then when you have people in authority telling him something
And you tell him something else,
He is like; well what do you know, they are the teachers, they should know,
And then after you get out of school, you realize you can't go anywhere with what you have gotten
Now he realizes [it]
But, it's like, too late
Either you go back to school and you get the 30's
Or you make do

(Alice, personal communication, July 20, 2004)

He Is Always in Sports: He Is a Sports Boy

Alice's comment about her son's fascination with sports in the previous section allows me to lead into a discussion on sports and the Caribbean Canadian school experience. All parents with male children discussed the role sports played in their boys' education.

He is always in sport,
He is a sports boy,
So he knows where he wants to go in his sport
He is a baseball player
He knows where he wants to go

> *And he is good at it and we spend the money on him for the baseball.*
>
> *But we also say you have to do the baseball, he was doing basket ball at school and baseball and the grades [are a pass]. But he is a kid who wants the grade as just pass.*
>
> *[J: Oh yes, a pass is okay?]*
>
> *Oh yes a pass is okay*
>
> *But I say if you could make 74 and 78 you could probably make 80 or 84*
>
> *And he does not study*
>
> *I don't know how he does it*
>
> (Rosemary, personal communication, June 21, 2004)

James (2005) writes about the myth of successful careers in sports that under-gird the reasons Black youth, their teachers and parents push Black youth in these arenas. For Black athletes, the accolade "basketball brains" or "high school students who excel in the classroom and on the courts" require grades that are in the 70s (pp. 7–8). As Rosemary is quick to point out, her son achieves these with little or no studying. James (2005) also asks what incentives now exist that encourage students of African-Caribbean heritage to invest this inordinate amount of energy and time in sporting activities now, when this endeavour was never part of our educational history?

The macho image is another sports-related challenge that parents of Black boys encounter in their boys' schooling experiences. School girls from all ethno-cultural groupsare attracted to the hyper-masculine individual and attach the "'black macho' lad" (Sewell, 2004, p. 103) label to Black adolescent males. Sewell portrays Black masculinity as "the complex intersections of masculinity and ethnicity where power is also sexualized and based on exaggerated phallocentricity which exploits women" (pp. 103–110). In this capacity the Black male is seen as an exotic object by the females and as a threat to the White male. As Sewell writes:

> Black phallocentrism has a mirror effect on the black male subject. He positions himself in phallocentric terms and this is confirmed by the obsessive jealousy of other groups. African-Caribbean boys are not passive subjects in the face of racialized and gendered stereotyping. They are active agents in discourses which appear to be seductively positive but are in essence racist. This leads to a strong confirmation of an identity that has its source in the dislocation of black and white masculinity. It points to a more complex formation of black masculinity that relies often on 'reputation' rather than substance and has its roots not in a crisis among black boys but in an 'insecurity' in white masculinity. (p. 112)

Caught at the nexus of some White male teachers who view them as threats to their own masculinity (Ladson-Billings, 1996), some adolescent females who see them as objects of either desire or conquest, and some White youth who try to emulate them (Sewell, 2004), Black males are challenged to stay focused on the objectives of schooling. In reality the Black male who is endowed with power is an imaginary phenomenon that does not really exist in Western culture. As hooks (2000) points out:

> The poor or working-class man who has been socialized via sexist ideology to believe that there are privileges and powers he should possess solely because he is male often finds that few, if any, of these benefits are automatically bestowed on

> him in life. More than any other male group in the United States, he is constantly concerned about the contradiction between the notion of masculinity he was taught and his inability to live up to that notion. (p. 75)

She continues, “The process by which men act as oppressors and are oppressed is particularly visible in black communities, where men are working-class and poor” (hooks, 2000, p. 75). This is especially true in the Caribbean Canadian community where children see their community leaders holding no political office, with no financial acumen, and are not even educators, let alone administrators in the school system. These may be some of the main reasons Black adolescent males fail to navigate and negotiate schooling.

I Do Not Want to Be “His Little Black Stud”

Ursula’s dialogue points out why some youths may decide not to participate in sports,

Eaton is the kind of guy who does not like attention on him
In fact I remember
He is a very good athlete
And he did not do very much sport in Junior High
And I found out later it’s because he did not want to be “Their Little Black Stud”
The principal phoned me and said he wants to coach Eaton for Basketball
And Eaton had no interest

And it is not until after I am finding this out

He said Mom he just wanted me to be his "Little Black Stud"

And I was not going to be his "Little Black Stud"

So he just did what was required for sports for his PE [physical education]

And end of story

In Robert Smith High School he was involved in everything

At this point I am saying what brought you from nothing into "Mr. Jock" now

He says everybody does according to their capabilities

Nobody was telling him to [do so]

He made the choice

(Ursula, personal communication, July 16, 2004)

Even when Eaton did decide to participate in intramural sports, his mother did not want this participation to interrupt his scholastic work.

And even at his sports,

[During] his last year at high school he was the running back for the team

They had to practice every evening for about an hour

He gets home he is beat, he can't even study

By the time he has supper he is asleep

I say: You tell that coach if you can't practice three times a week

Then you will have to quit

He told him

And he [the coach] said it is not fair

So [I said] well he will have to find another running back because your schoolwork is the priority

[J: How did the coach take that?]

He was ticked [off] and I told Eaton I was going to talk to him [the coach]

But Eaton said that he wanted to deal with it

And I am sure if I had talked to him he probably would have gone along with it

But he wanted to do so

The coach told him that he hoped he [Eaton] could work on changing his mother's mind

I said: No

He has to change his [plans] because we don't have five evenings

And sometimes weekends to give him

Those are not the priorities

[J: And how did Eaton feel about not playing?]

You know, he did not have a problem with it

Because he realized that he was putting in less [time in his school] work and he is very disciplined with his [school] work

(Ursula, personal communicaton, July 16, 2004)

As James (2005) asserted, Caribbean culture does not emphasize the playing of professional sports at the expense of attaining an education. North American culture glorifies professional sports. However, the failure to note the cultural difference between Caribbean Canadians and African Americans contributes to this racialization in sports, especially basketball and football, which are not played at the professional level in the Caribbean. The one exception may be baseball, the game which Rosemary and Lance's son plays, as this is quite similar to cricket, which is an English Caribbean national pastime (C. L. R. James, 1963/2002). In this case, when the parents agree with the child's ambitions to do sport, they also encourage him to work on his academics as well. Lance said the following about his son's desire to play baseball.

> *My boy enjoys playing baseball*
> *So I say that is an option*
> *But in order for you to use that option*
> *You have to do well in school*
> *This is one of the requirements*
> *He wants to go on to the major leagues to play baseball*
> *You have to do well in school*
> *You have to have the confidence that you can do both*
> *You can do well in school and you can do well on the baseball field*
> *So you have to prepare yourself for that*
> *How do you prepare yourself for that*
> *By giving each one of your goals ample time*
> *Invest equal amount of time in each one of your goals*
> *Your goal is to do well academically*

And your goal is to do well in baseball

(Lance, personal communicaton, August 1, 2004)

Baseball was an extra-curricula activity for Lance's son and both parents have supported him. According to his parents, he is passionate about baseball, which incidentally is not performed within the school structure. She indicated that the family "spend[s] over ten thousand dollars a year on baseball" (personal communication, 2004), by trying to attend many of the games and of course fund his program. As Rosemary said:

They had sports

They were doing sports and to me sports are important for the kids who are in school

It gives them something to look forward to at school

It gives them time away from things that are not important

I mean like just walking around and doing nothing

Going to the malls, to me that is not a good way to be

You know sports took up a lot of their time

That's all they know

They had the sports after school

So they did not have time for anything else

Or to get into trouble

(Rosemary, personal communicaton, June 21, 2004)

Rosemary also talked about the support that the family has given to her children by also attending as much of their children's activities.

When we go to watch them play sports we are always the only Black parents
And I always look around and say: Where are the other Black kids
Where are they
At basketball, or baseball, my son is the only Black kid out there
And I don't know where the others are
We have been there for years
We spend over ten thousand a year on baseball.
[J: Ten thousand a year on baseball!]
Ten thousand a year on baseball, and we go all over
We go to the [United] States and all over
We all go there, three times a year

(Rosemary, personal communicaton, June 21, 2004)

Caribbean Canadian Youth and School Participation

Rosemary stated her son is very much a loner. He is either attending school, or at home or playing baseball, at which he is quite good.

> *Rosemary: Yes he has always been like that, very quiet, he does not talk much; you do not even know that he is home. He works in his room, or he is on the computer or he is down here. Or he goes somewhere.*

(Rosemary, personal communicaton, June 21, 2004)

Although he attends school, he routinely practices "mental tuning out" (Contenta, 1993, p. 31) by not participating in many school activities and seldom studying. His grades are a high average, but both parents feel that these would be higher if he were to apply himself to his school work. Accordingly, he just goes to school and returns home as soon as his classes are completed. Sewell (2004) will define him as being somewhat of a "retreatist" (p. 109) or an invisible resistor. Retreatists are "students who reject both the goals and means of schooling but for whom these are not replaced by the subculture. In fact schooling is replaced with no significant alternative: their task is simply to reject work" (p. 109).

Teacher's Preconceived Impressions Affect Students' Self Esteem

The last comment from one parent conversed about a classroom experience where a Black girl was reprimanded by a teacher for a behaviour that was attributable to a White student. His experience points out ways in which Black students may be singled out for improper behaviour and may lead to a negative halo-effect when future judgements are made by the teacher. The Encarta Dictionary (2007) defines halo effect as "the tendency to judge somebody as being totally good because one aspect of his or her character is good" (p. 1). For many Blacks there is this jeopardy which is difficult to rise above once he or she is labelled.

I have experienced this for myself.

I went to the school to help with, to help out with the class

> *And I am sitting there and this White girl is misbehaving and without lifting her head the teacher is calling on this Black girl to behave herself;*
> *"Crystal will you cut that out"*
> *And Crystal wasn't even misbehaving,*
> *She was doing her work*
> *And the White girl was misbehaving but the teacher automatically assumed that it is Crystal who is the trouble maker*
> *That she could close her eyes and pick out the troublemaker.*
> *She could close her eyes and pick out the troublemaker,*
> *She could close her eyes and pick out the troublemaker in the class*
>
> (Lance, personal communicaton, August 1, 2004)

His recollection of this incident and his repetition of the statement "she could close her eyes and pick out the troublemaker" (Lance, personal communicaton, August 1, 2004), lead me to assume that the experience has left him with a lasting impression about how the teacher was treating Crystal, who is Black.

Watching Over Our Children

Motherhood

The home environment is also important in obtaining success at school. As is seen throughout the discussions with the research participants, parents took initiatives to remain informed about their children's school progress. This gave them the ability to intercede as soon as a problem was apparent. Politeness to parents and understanding their goals are big factors in this respect. This allows both parents and the children to trust each other when they mediate each other's objectives. The parents I interviewed did not allow their children to work after school insisting instead that they participate in other extra-curricula activities. Sporting activities, which were already discussed, were important for the boys. The activities other students were committed to were church, community lessons, and music. Two girls sang in their church's choir and one actually pursued her professional singing at a Canadian university.

> *Rosemary: My son still asks to go out. He drives my car. He has been driving since he was fourteen and then he got his license at fifteen and he has been driving that car to school everyday. The car is in the garage. He goes to school and he comes home. So we put that so by saying if you want that privilege, gas cost money, so that is not for you to drive around with. So he knows that he goes to school and he comes home.*
>
> *J: Has he always been like that?*
>
> *Yes*
>
> *J: Is that right? I wonder why?*
>
> *Rosemary: No he does not study. He goes to school long hand he comes back home, long hands [swinging], I don't know how he does it*
>
> *J: Is that right?*
>
> *Rosemary: We used to go to the parent teacher meeting and we would say okay, you didn't do too good in this one here but when they get to grade twelve we didn't see the need to do that. We give them a lot of*

responsibility and say you know now what we expect of you we say, because it is not for the want of us saying "I haven't seen you picking up the book, bring what you were doing. They used to bring the stuff to us and show us what they were doing but that sort of has tapered off because like I have said we give them that sort of freedom to say well okay this is what I am studying here if you have problems, come to us. Not that we would probably understand all of that because a lot of the stuff they are doing in the school here, I don't understand half of it. But at least show us. We want you to show that interest. Show us what you are doing; let's see where you are at so I said come to us if you have any problems. So we said okay. We are okay until we see the final mark at the end of the year. And then we say oh I thought you didn't need help, what happened here. And we get the same thing every year. I will study harder next year. Or I will study hard. You can have a tutor. Oh no, I don't need a tutor. I will study hard next year

J: Is that for both children?

Rosemary: Both of them.

In this response I see both students passively resisting school. Research has shown that although African-Caribbean girls are more successful than their counterparts at school, they passively resist school as well. Here, as Bhatti (2004) claims, they "use school in a way that is 'instrumental, that is, knowledge is valued not for its own sake but as a means to an end, that of gaining qualifications" (p. 139). Following this assumption, I asked my next question to Rosemary. Her responses revealed that both students had to upgrade their marks upon completion of Grade 12. However, the parents have continued to influence their children to improve their grades and the children did comply with their request.

> *[J: Do both of them have the same temperament?]*
>
> *Rosemary: Oh yes, yes, so right now my daughter is finished. She graduated last year. She wanted to bring all her grades up higher so she went downtown to Bishop College to do some courses there. She is just finishing up this week also.*
>
> *She has been doing pretty good, so she will be going to general studies in September. She will take a whole bunch of subjects and just decide later. Because she doesn't know exactly what she wants to do as yet.*
>
> *But with Keith [Rosemary's son] we will be sending him away*
>
> *[J: Where is he going?]*
>
> *Rosemary: He is going to Queenstown*
>
> *[J: He is going to Queenstown?]*
>
> *Rosemary: He is going to Queenstown College. It's called PBA: it's a baseball college. They play baseball and go to school.*
>
> *[J: Is he going to go into grade 12?]*
>
> *Rosemary: No, it's a college. He is graduating this week. He is graduating from grade 12 this week and then he is going there.*
>
> *[J: So they have already accepted him]*

Rosemary: Yes

[J: So he already knows what he wants to do. So that is his path?]

Rosemary: Yep, yep. So you see with our kids they had the college fund. The college fund is there for them, they knew that. So we told them when you start to go to college all we have to do is to phone and get the money to pay for college. We don't have to say that we have to work to pay for this. The money is already there. As babies we have put aside the money for them so they know that.

[J: Why did you put aside money in the college fund for them?]

Rosemary: Because, it is easier for them, it is easier for them so that they do not have to work and go to school.

[J: Did the fact that your parents couldn't do this for you contribute to your decision?]

Rosemary: I don't think that was the thought. I didn't think that was the thought. We wanted that for them. We wanted an easy life for them because like, they didn't grow up, they don't know what living in an apartment is like. They have always had stuff.

[J: Right.]

Rosemary: Because of the dad's position and my position we have been able to provide for them, so we see that as being able to provide for them so as to make life easy for them. We see kids going to school and working *at a young age and I just do not understand that. Working at McDonalds, oh no, no, no.*

[J: What about your daughter?]

Rosemary: She is working at Value Village [a department store] because she is finished with school. She is working at Value Village and going to school. But she will only work in the morning.

[J: So she never worked.]

Rosemary: No, no

[J: Did they say anything about it?]

They had sports. They were doing sports and to me sports are important for the kids in school. It gives them something to look forward to at school. It gives them time away from things that are not important. I mean like just walking around doing nothing. Going to the malls, to me that is not a good way to be. You know sports took up a lot of their time. That's all that they know. They had the sports after school, so they did not have time for anything else, to get into trouble. Yes, putting away the monies, we did that for them as babies. The money is there for them when they go to college. [They are to] use it wisely because when that's done that's all they have. That's all they get because we are coming to retirement age closely. Whatever we have now is ours to spend, that's yours, use it wisely. So that's what we did.

From this excerpt I purport that Rosemary, like many other Caribbean Canadian parents, values education, ambition, and a healthy, active lifestyle. Working after school is not an activity we value for our teenage children. Instead we see it as an activity they do after their schooling is completed. We support this belief by not insisting that our children leave home when they have completed high school. This observation must be noted by Rosemary's indication that her son, Keith, will be leaving home because he is going away to school. She does not make this observation for her daughter, who is expected to stay home, complete her post-secondary schooling, while she maintains a part-time job.

Notice also that Rosemary used the phrase "when you start to go to college." This was always the expectation of my parents and they used that phrase often with their children. I have never heard my parents say to me "if you go to college," instead it was always "when you go to college." I draw this to the reader's attention because, in the case of my children, I discerned very early in their junior high experience that there was some doubt in their minds as to if they would ever go to college, even though they knew that both their parents were university graduates.

Fatherhood

As the male head of the Caribbean Canadian household, Lance represents many Caribbean fathers' perspectives about how they raise their girls and boys. I see his behaviour similar to that of my father's who focused his attention more on the schooling of my brother than on my schooling. Chevannes (2002) writes:

> If throughout the Anglophone Caribbean fatherhood is a status, it is also a role which men are expected to play. There are two generally recognised aspects of that role, namely providing for one's children and being the guardian of their moral development, particularly the boys. (p. 218)

He also contends that "How these roles are fulfilled, is determined not only by the prevailing notions of patriarchy, but also by the structure of the family at a given stage in the domestic life cycle" (p. 218). Implicit in this statement is the role played by female heads of households in the Caribbean in raising their children. Examples of these roles were laid out in Ursula and Alice dialogues. Lance's dialogue details his involvement in his children's education. His discourse indicates that he was more attentive to his son's school experience than his daughter's experiences. His son had more problems adjusting to school and resisted authority, while his daughter appeared to have had very little. Bhatti (2004) suggests that girls adopt an instrumental trend to openly resist the curriculum. This is indeed the situation that Lance observed and recounted.

> *Lance: My girl went through from kindergarten to grade 12, [and] she graduated. She never had any problems that I know of. She was always happy; never one day says: well I don't feel like going to school. Never one day or were they ever, I think on a few occasions she might have been too sick to go to school but never one day did she say well I don't feel like going to school. She may say well I don't like school but she never said she don't want to go to school so she always attended school. She might be late or she might have a sick day but, the thing for her was that she played basketball for the school and it was pretty smooth sailing*

> *for her, she never really had any problems. My boy, he got into a fight once in junior high, now what do they have. He went from kindergarten, to elementary, then he went to, he went to three different schools, junior high, before junior high it was elementary. He got into a fight there and I had to go to in school and talk to the principal. Like we were always there for them and two guys attacked him and he hurt one of them, and the teacher was telling me well I should tell him that he shouldn't be fighting because fighting isn't allowed in the school. My sense was he is allowed to defend himself and I would support him a hundred percent if two guys attacked him and he hurt one of them, then he has gotten my support, because I don't want [people to take advantage of him]. I grew up with four brothers and three sisters and nobody ever took advantage of me. And I would hate like hell to see that happen to my kid. So he has gotten my consent to defend himself at all cost. That is the stand I took and he was never really bothered after that. Once a kid called him a nigger in school and he reported it to the teacher. He told us at home and I had planned to go to the school to talk to the teacher about it but he went and talked to the teacher and they called the kid in and reprimanded the kid.*

Lance's summary statement is what I believe most Caribbean Canadian parents wish for their children.

Conclusion

Chapter Six has provided the vexing issues that my research participants shared about their children school experiences. Unnecessary psychological testing, racism, bullying, lack of recognition, streaming were some of the issues parents contended with during their children's schooling. Parents and students confronted these issues in various ways. Some transferred their children to other schools, while others chose to discuss these problems with the school principals and teachers. The experiences children have during their school lives form lasting impressions which they remember even as adults. For example my daughters constantly remind me of some of the injustices they had to endure during their schooling. They also remind me of the stances I took to deal with their problems. Even today, my daughter will complain: "Mom, I told you my teacher was racist, and you did not believe me." These are haunting words and I often wonder about my own frustrations and expressions of resignation as I contended with the drudgery of confronting injustice and my concomitant denial of it. In a sense, writing this dissertation is my own approach to dealing with my own children's negative school experiences.

A fitting example to explain my point that individuals might choose other alternatives to dealing with racism is given by Kallen (2003). She writes about John Humphrey, who suffered the loss of his arm in a fire he started and was orphaned by at age 11. He endured teasing and taunting at school because of his disability and had enough reason to focus and internalize this treatment. The story goes that he soon discovered that schoolyard fighting was a very counter-productive way to correct the injustices he experienced. He went on to study law at McGill University, Montreal, and is credited as the architect of the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Kallen, 2003).

In Chapter Seven, I will demonstrate that these were not my participants' total experiences when I highlight the major themes that my research generated. Chapter Seven will show that parents do support teachers when they perceive their children are treated fairly and with respect.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Success: What Creates It

The foci of Chapters Four, Five, and Six were on the analysis of the dialogues my research participants and I provided for this dissertation. In Chapter Four I outlined the education we had in the Caribbean. Further, I unpacked the information provided by turning to critical discourse analysis. With this analysis I pinpointed the education cultural identity of the research participants, and I demonstrated that this identity was developed from a combination of political, social, cultural, and economic factors, as well as the degree with which these individuals were influenced by these and other culturally influencing educational structures. Chapter Five provided a further analysis of the discussions revealing the political underpinnings of Caribbean formal and informal education. Colonialism and Caribbean schooling, and cultural pedagogy were major themes that emerged in this chapter.

In Chapter Six, the focus shifted to Edmonton and the education experiences in this landscape. Emerging from our discussions were experiences of individual and systemic racism, lack of proper recognition, and stereotyping. Research participants' comments point out some degree of frustration with the educational system brought about by the dichotomy between parental expectations and school perceptions of the students' abilities. Withdrawing their children from schools and shopping around for education were routine activities for the parents with whom I conversed. I do not wish to leave the reader with the impression that their experiences were all negative. Indeed Chapter Seven will show that parents in this research did have positive experiences. These positive experiences are presented in this chapter, as I provide a comprehensive analysis of the themes that constitute a good education. The parents with whom I spoke felt that they had succeeded in navigating the school system. Other parents, who spoke about their failure "off the record," declined the invitation to participate in this research. Their perspectives will have to be documented in future research as there is a need to tease out the relationship between Caribbean Canadian parental school success and that of their progenies.

Understanding Self-Actualization

The participants' dialogues suggested Caribbean Canadian parents had differing standards for scholastic success and achievement. This is evident in the following conversation I had with Ursula. To Ursula all her children should excel in programs designed for academically gifted students.

> *Eaton went to Junior High in Brunswick.*
>
> *And he had actually,*
>
> *He ended up doing exceptionally well in his IB (International Baccalaureate Program)*
>
> *And I have to write his science teacher a letter*
>
> *Because he keeps telling me Mom, what I did in science in there made me.*
>
> . .
>
> *On his provincial he got a "7" which is a perfect score in his chemistry*
>
> *And stuff*

And he said if it were not for that teacher he wouldn't.

In Rosemary and Lance's case, their son and daughter did not achieve as high as Eaton, scholastically, but their marks were satisfactory. They upgraded their existing marks, and finally attended community colleges. Errol and Pamela's and Frank and Valarie's children obtained grades to attend post-secondary schools while still pursuing their sporting or musical passions. Alice's son was the only obvious academic failure; however, she was working to ensure her girls fared better. Clearly, Ursula, who challenged the school system from the outset, achieved her goal of high academic success for all three of her children. My children did achieve a holistic education and now hold university degrees. The elder was an officer in Canada's naval reserve, and the younger has held executive positions in community and social organizations. This analysis demonstrates that Caribbean Canadian parents in this research do encourage their children to excel in their academic and non-academic pursuits. Also clear from this analysis is the notion that each family's definition of self-actualization is relative but failure to achieve this goal is not an option.

Following the Lead

In this next case, the Ursula's daughter Anita was inspired by her brother Eaton and she was able to acquire the grades to get into the International Baccalaureate program.

In her last year of Junior High

She said to me that she realized the importance of [getting good grades]
And even [with] some of her classes
She has gone from 60s to over 80s
And I think it is her will
And I pretty well said
You know what
You are setting the pace for how you want to live
Like in the future
And this is what is expected
If you want to move ahead this is the grade you need
She wanted to do IB
Her brother did it
You have to have 80 and over in all your courses
And she has been able to get into an IB program at Robert Smith High School
And this has happened in the last year

Following these ranges of successes, I now will turn to what parents listed as important items which led to these success stories. The first is the educational environment where the students received their formal education. Ursula's comments define what she perceives are the qualities of a good education. In her opinion, the characteristics of an excellent education are the recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity, the banning of racist behaviours, striving for excellent student performance, empowering students to excel, and enabling parental input.

[J: What else would you like to have seen? . . . And, this can be as broad as you would like to take it,] in your children's school experiences?]

Ursula: Right now I think my daughters especially they are getting a great education . . .

Because the school that they go to

It truly represents the Canada we live in

In terms of representation and culture and ethnic group

You have every body there

And

In terms of racism there

It is serious and it [racism] is not tolerated

In fact you are suspended for it

Reasons,

They stick with the basics,

They strive for excellence,

In terms of pushing the kids the furthest that they can go.

And they allow parental input.

Parents were supportive of cultural and ethnic diversity and they acknowledged this when serious attempts were made at schools to acquire the cultural and ethnic mixes that were reflective of Canada's multicultural diversity. This diversity was not superficial but was integrated through the school's pedagogy and practices. The cultural and ethnic mix in the school warrants that the students adhere to a strict intolerance of racism. But in one parent's opinion, the school did not just say that racism will not be tolerated; it endeavoured to ensure that all students attained high levels of behaviour and achievement. In other words, the school's focus and the parent's objective are in tandem. The teachers expanded their knowledge base in some subject areas by considering parents as a resource for subject materials. In addition, the relationships emerging from these diverse ethno-cultural groups were based on academic interests as opposed to non-academic interests. Ursula's son moved with his friends from a small charter school to the Edmonton public school system to complete his senior years. Ursula and I had the following conversation about her son's experience at Edmonton public school:

> *[J: So with respect to these jocks and stuff, how does he handle the pressure of these girls at school?]*
> *Eaton coming out of Brunswick [the charter school]*
> *He was coming out like a little geek*
> *And I think sports was able to equalize that*
> *In fact now he was the Jock*
> *They were all coming to him*
> *[J: The girls?]*
> *The girls, and he was not interested anyways*
> *Because*
> *Also the agreement in our family*
> *No one is allowed to date until after eighteen*
> *So he is turned loose this summer*

[Laughter]

And he has lived up to that expectation

[J: Which is?]

That he is not allowed to have a girlfriend until he is eighteen

Plain and simple

And we explained to him the pros and cons of it

What the priorities are

At high school he had lots of girls coming

And I said, if you can't tell them your mother would help you

I will let them know

[Laughter]

If you can't tell them yourself I will let them know

So he pretty well let them know that

Surely

He is just not interested in that stuff

[J: So what is happening now that he has been turned loose?]

I don't know yet

[Laughter]

I had to do this the other day,

Now do it gently now

And still remember your priorities

And you know it's okay to have friends

But you are not making commitments until you are finished with university

[Laughter]

[J: Which could be next ten years?]

Well he said seven

He would like to wrap it up in seven

Multicultural Perspective

For the most part, people from the Caribbean send their children to school primarily for a sound education. From this research participant's point of view, having to cope with racism and other obstacles are detractors from the real purpose of attending school. There may be many assumptions as to why these detractors are allowed to persist in our children's educational experiences. The promise of a multicultural country extends to the school environment and we see here an awareness that does not go unnoticed as Ursula cites the benefits from having a diverse student body.

Although, as Ursula says, the student body is an ethno-cultural mix at the Junior high school, it was no surprise to me that the teachers are primarily White. However, as we see, racism does not appear to be a problem because the school has a racism policy to which it adheres. As my discussion continues with Ursula, the school's culture was one of her main reasons for changing the schools her children attended.

[J: Is there a cultural mix with the teacher population as well, so that it reflects this diversity?]

Ursula: Not as much as it should be

Yes

But the thing is

The teachers they have now

They all have a really

What should I say . . .

They have a world view in terms of life and expectation

So you pretty well

You do have input

That if you are not happy with a particular teacher

And I have had to do that

And they would listen, yes

Canada has always been hailed as the first to have a multicultural policy for its citizens. Our educational system's success at implementing a multiculturalism curriculum in some ways can serve as a model for wide dissemination and emulation. However, all too often, multicultural education is limited to topics that are discussed in social studies. Pre-service teachers think that sciences and mathematics are Western constructs. Curricula designers should be encouraged to utilize the Internet to bring the rest of the world into the classroom when they design the content of mathematical and science courses.

Teachers must also understand that multicultural education is not simply to demonstrate diversity to the minority represented students. Multicultural education is also for the benefit of the majority represented student. By demonstrating the inclusion of every child to the entire student body, it is possible for multicultural education to reinforce the right to personhood that each individual Canadian boasts. In Chapter One, I disclosed how my daughter's rights as a person were denied when she was involved in a traffic accident. Educators must understand those instances, when they demonstrate exclusion in the classroom; these understandings are imprinted into the minds of their students. Students graduate to become law enforcers, civil servants, mathematicians, political leaders and even teachers. Breaking the cycle of racism and bullying must become policy in the classrooms of our nation's schools before Canada can claim to be truly multicultural.

Global Citizenship

Education in Canada must be placed in a global landscape. The global landscape is an "imaginary landscape" (Appadurai, 2003, p. 29), linking "communities and organizations in new time-space combinations, [thus] making the world in reality and in experience more interconnected" (Hall, 1999, p. 630). Economic development continues to dictate the movements of people and resources across national borders. Environmental concerns more than ever demonstrate the need for a global perspective that incorporates an analysis of the universe. The cultural identity model (Figure 3) suggests that one's cultural identity is formed through the relationships one has with the spheres within one's near environment, and those up to and including the universal sphere. Our education must incorporate this understanding, especially in this age of space exploration and conquest.

Errol demonstrated this broader understanding when he expressed the point that his dinner table routine included discussions about international events.

> *And we talk about what is happening in the papers, in the news,*
>
> *Because we are all interested in what is happening internationally.*

Frank, on the other hand, felt his children's formal education was narrowly focused in this area to present a European or First World perspective.

> *Under their education system*
>
> *I find when you look at the work*
>
> *They cover Canada and what goes on [here] more than adequately*
>
> *You know*
>
> *Than the US and Europe*
>
> *And I don't find that they consider the others*
>
> *You know*
>
> *What I call 90 percent of this planet*
>
> *You know*
>
> *People have very different lives to the Western European and North American societies*
>
> *So for us to be happier*
>
> *I would like to see us cover the Caribbean*
>
> *That's a region, Central and South America a lot more*
>
> *The daily lives of those people*
>
> *And how people see things and that kind of thing*

(Frank, personal communicaton, June 16, 2004)

Education with a narrow focus distances our children from the majority of other people in the world. In 2005, Eaton visited Guyana, South America, as a volunteer member of an International Health Association and wishes to have a career in that field (Eaton, personal communicaton, December 2006). Like Eaton, other Canadian Caribbean heritage children would like to participate in global projects and should make excellent empathetic ambassadors and aid workers. However, with an education that distances them from the realities of their global relatives, our children's border crossing experiences may be more difficult than those of the dominant society who have historically had a missionary culture. Our children are thus being robbed of opportunities to be good global partners with their kith and kin who struggle with poverty, substandard living conditions, disease and illnesses.

Holistic Education

Lance and Errol viewed a holistic education or one that sought to promote individual well being, along with a healthy body and an active healthy mind, as helpful in their children's growth and development. Ursula also stated that outdoor activities were part of the learning that takes place in her children's school. She spoke very enthusiastically about the outdoor activities in which her son participated while he attended Tranquility school.

[J: So what do they do for fun in school?]

Ursula: For fun at Tranquility?

Actually they have lots of field trips at Tranquility.

They go to Drumheller,

The Badlands,

They went camping in Strathcona,

They just,

Actually for their Grade 9 graduation

They went out camping out in the Rocky Mountains.

[J: Oh did they?]

Ursula: They did White Water Rafting

[J: Who took them there?]

Ursula: The principal took them out for four days

And they have done a lot of that

The teachers and they really are in sync with each other

[J: Oh yes]

Ursula: Oh yes, they really work as a team

[J: The teachers?]

Ursula: Yes, the teachers and the students

It's reflected in them

[J: How do your children respond to that school climate, the outings and stuff like that?]

Ursula: Oh they love it

They love it

The learning environment that Ursula explains in our discussion was very similar to the experiences that my research participants spoke about in the Caribbean School culture. Clearly this is a school environment in which students of Caribbean heritage will excel. As she says her children excel in a competitive environment where collaborative work is also part of the school culture.

> *Ursula: Yes, big time. And I think that's what a lot of the camping did.*
>
> *[J: Oh.]*
>
> *Ursula: I think that worked a lot for them*
>
> *Building that kind of relationship*
>
> *Because I think that at the school it could be very, very competitive*
>
> *But I think also it shows them the importance of helping each other, team work, working together,*
>
> *Which they do a lot*
>
> *And they participate in a lot of Science fairs*
>
> *And those kinds of stuff*
>
> *And they always push to have them do it as groups so that you are feeding off each other*
>
> *They push that a lot*
>
> *[J: These kinds of friendships that they are building help towards self-actualization. Because nowadays when you are looking for a job they usually say it is not what you know, but who you know that's important.]*
>
> *Of course [it is] in the long term I am sure.*

Year-round outdoor activity is something that is taken for granted in the Caribbean. It is part of the cultural experiences of youth and is very easy and inexpensive to organize as Errol and Lance attest. Male youth getting together to hang out is affectionately referred to as "liming" in the Caribbean (Walrond-Patterson, 1999). To some extent, Eaton's school was able to bring these youth together for special outdoor activities and channelled their energies positively. These types of activities are very different from sporting activities. Here the focus is not on school accolades and individual financial remuneration, but on challenging students to participate in the outdoors for health rewards. Students are encouraged to work as a team in seeking to coexist with nature rather than trying to conquer another school's team. Many Caribbean Canadian heritage youth do not have this experience either in school or in the Caribbean Canadian community. As Rosemary points out, the male youth fill this void with activities in shopping malls or in society (Rosemary, personal communicaton, June 21, 2004), where they can easily be preyed upon or victimized. Research is needed in this area to determine whether this lack of programming is detrimental to the development of youth in the Caribbean community.

The Tutoring Programs on Saturdays Help

In this section I present a parent who has turned to the community to help her with educating her children. As a single parent this support is extremely important if she wishes her children to succeed. Many other parents in the Caribbean community seek this option. These are volunteer organizations, with limited resources at their disposal and must be complimented for their initiatives.

Alice: Not as well as I would like. I think it is very limited, but I am trying my best by getting my kids involved in things outside of the structural education to encourage them to do better.

[An expression of resignation]

[J: Exactly, and what, can you tell me some of the things that you do try?]

Alice: Well working with them at home, sacrificing my Saturdays, to take them down to tutorial, you know, getting other people outside of school, you know friends and such to work along with us, getting them involved with the community, meeting people that have, that are professionals and stuff like that, so they will try to become successful like them.

[J: Okay, and how has the tutoring on Saturdays helped/]

Alice: Not too bad. They just don't because it's early and they are up at 6:30 every day in the week and it's kind of hard to get them there all the time.

J: Yes.

Alice: You know, it is helping a little. It is just that they need to find more tutors that are more committed; they are not up there just for the dollars.

[J: Okay.]

Alice: That's what I am noticing. Sometimes they are not, I know they have a life and they need to do things, but sometimes I find that when I bring the kids there I am coming there and the teachers are not there.

> *[J: Okay.]*
>
> *Alice: You know you bring them there for the two hours, the one hour, whatever, and one of the teachers is not there. They are there for Math and Reading, the Reading teacher is there and the Math teacher is not there and it is wasting a lot of time sometimes, you know.*

Until the teaching staff at Edmonton's schools is at the critical mass where students can see themselves and have the assurance that these teachers of their own heritage are committed to being their mentors, community teaching programs have to be made available and promoted to all Black heritage students. The lack of Black teachers in the school lives of Black students makes this community program vital. The Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage (CCACH) operates a tutorial program on Saturdays. The teachers in this program are usually high school graduates who are attending university. These youths are also mentors to their pupils. But, as Alice points out, sometimes these teachers are delinquent in their responsibilities. However, this is the reality of a volunteer organization that is trying to fill the gap that is not filled by the education system. The teachers are important to our organization and we have a waiting list of students who wish to avail themselves of this program. However, limited, unsecured funding dictates the kind of work CCACH is able to perform. Clearly, an under-funded program that operates at the discretion of our funding agencies is not a viable solution to the community's education woes. Others argue as to why the Caribbean community, as taxpayers, should have to organize its own, largely volunteer system to educate its children properly. This format of community education also shifts the responsibility for formal education from the education system to the community. Many non-English speaking communities organize heritage language classes for their members. However, as Alice and I know, the main function of CCACH's program is to help our children improve on their grades.

Black teachers continually remind us about the impact their presence has on the Black youth with whom they interact at schools. My daughter, Abiona, has spoken on several occasions about young Black students reaching out to her at school. When she meets with their parents, they often remark about the glee their children share about having a Black teacher for their home room. She enjoys this role and models this enthusiasm to her students and their parents. However, playing this role does become exhausting and problematic. James (2000) calls the role my daughter portrays as being "informed by the liberal multicultural approach" as she is supposed to give credence to the liberal assumption that meritocracy exists (p. 89). These teachers may be uncomfortable about the pretence they have to portray as role model. The role model message does not address the question of whether it is possible to acquire a particular role (James, 2000). Further, an individual's identity is a composite of the extent to which he or she interacts with roles and structures (See Fig. 3). This suggests that not all Blacks may wish to be viewed as role models. Black teachers may feel pressured to adopt the persona of a role model when, in actually, this role may not be an aspect of their cultural identity.

Discernment of Parents Around their Children's Education

Schooling was a high priority for the parents in this research. Parents started selecting schools even when their children were pre-schoolers. In my own case I ensured that my daughters, Abiona and Michelle, would be bilingual by sending them to French Catholic schools in Edmonton. As Pamela said and her husband, Errol concurred:

> *Yes, we had to, I think [we started out by] choosing the Montessori school system for our children*
>
> *And choosing to spend the money to send them there was one of the choices we made*
>
> *Because we were immigrants*
>
> *And you know I felt assured that [these initiatives] would get them the type of introduction they needed*
>
> *Choosing to go to French Immersion, I think that was another move on our part.*
>
> (Alice, personal communication, July 28, 2004)

Parents spent money on their children's education and their after school activities. When they could not afford to pay extra for the education of their children, they sought out community initiatives to get the additional education their children needed to perform well at school.

By attending to her children's schooling Alice and Ursula were able to identify systemic behaviours which the administrators were either not willing or prepared to interrogate. In a neo-liberal society such as Alberta, Ursula becomes "an educational, consumer parent" (Kachur, 1999a, p. 60).

And that's when I decided to shop around for schools.

So I literally went into the phone book, picked out a couple not too far in our neighbourhood and I asked for interviews with the principals and the teachers who would be teaching my children and I did that with about five schools and I happened on Tranquility. But one thing was that they did not have space for us, so we were on waiting lists for quite a while and I ended up sending Eaton out to school out in Brunswick.

J: Why Brunswick?

Ursula: Because after I interviewed teachers

And stuff

I pretty well put it on the table.

This is my expectation,

We have very, very strong interest in academics

And he is going to university.

Racism, no!

How do you feel about it?

How do you deal with it?

If you can't give me a good answer,

No thank you, next one.

So I ended up with [the schools I felt were satisfactory]

As for Anita and Martha I sent them to York Town

And there, it was a good school

. . .

But I went to about five or six schools

And pretty well I said

You know what this is the problem we have had

This is what I don't want, what can you offer me,

How have you dealt with similar situations in the past?

And if you know they are hesitant,

They can't give you an answer,

I know

They can't tell me it didn't come up

So I just move on to the next one.

And it is hard work because

I know even with my "EX" [ex-husband]

I did not get the support.

His look at it was—why can't the children go to the community school,

Well all schools don't come equal.

As her statements suggest, sometimes it is easier to accept situations rather than contest them. Ursula was prepared to challenge the system for the education she felt her children should receive. Perhaps she did not have the theory to support her feelings, but she surely knew something of which Foucault (1999) writes:

> Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of

> discourse. But we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. (p. 417)

Caribbean Canadian Single Parents

Single Caribbean Canadian parents who, for the most part, are females (Barrow, 2002; Chamberlain, 2006), do try to make a difference with their children as the responses of two of my single mothers attest. Chamberlain (2006) suggests that the embrace of children born to non-nuclear families, child fostering, and female-headed households stands

> In mark contrast to the (apparently) stable unions of Christian marriages, predicated on the autonomy and exclusiveness of family life, on the subservience of women and children to the authority of the male, and on the prominence given to the male line of inheritance and family identification. (p. 4)

Further, Barrow (2002) asserts that female-headed families were stigmatized by functionalist and feminist literature as reflective of male migration, impoverishment, and moral impropriety. Further, she points out,

> Within the black population of the Caribbean however, they have also been linked with matrifocal or female-centred families, and female economic and personal autonomy traced from the African past through slavery to survive as a central feature in family life. In other words, Afro-Caribbean female-headed households are not a new indicator of Third World dependency, underdevelopment and

> poverty, but are deeply embedded in the kinship culture and gender ideology of the region (p. 202)

Viewed from this perspective, the analysis of Ursula and Alice's conversations makes complete sense. Further, Ursula's and Eaton's relationship, when placed in this context, is also understood. As Barrow continues, "this perspective (of male unemployment, or migration and poverty) centred women at the apex of extended kinship networks, often transnational in scope, heading their households and coping single-handedly and successfully with child-rearing, housework and economic maintenance" (p. 203). Not surprising then, is the relative strengths of all the women mentioned in this dissertation. Barrow suggests, and I concur, that in doing feminist analysis, researchers must resist the temptation to view women in Caribbean culture with the stereotypical concepts of modesty, obedience, passivity, submission, and dependence.

J: How does he feel with these things in terms of his other siblings?

Ursula: He is very supportive, very, very supportive. One of the things is we don't buy cards here. Every Christmas we write letters to each other, what you are grateful for and he always, this is very emotional, [crying] because he is four years older than Anita. [Pause]

J: Take your time.

Ursula: Sometimes I have to remind him because I am divorced

J: Yes.

Ursula: He is not their father. He is their brother.

J: Oh

Ursula: Because I think he tries to feel that sometimes.

[J: Ah ha. [Whisper] *O God, I know what you mean, I know what you mean.]*

Ursula: Pretty well he is a good leader with them. Like, I know even with their homework and stuff. For example math, how I learnt math is so different from how they teach math now. Pretty well, so he has to do a lot of that when they ask questions.

[J. So do you find yourself as a divorced mom having to look after Black kids and wanting so much for them to succeed, do you find that a challenge?]

Ursula: No, because I think one of the reasons I left my relationship was that I know the environment we were in was not conducive to what I wanted for them.

[J: Is that right?]

Ursula: And it was part of the reason I left. But I wanted it to be peaceful, I didn't want them to have to be dealing with all the nagging and the fighting and the stuff, so they can focus on what is important.

[J: Education is that important for you?]

Ursula: Oh yes it is, very. And it is not even just education, but to be at peace with yourself.

As a student, Ursula was schooled by teachers who were influenced in Grenada by Freire's (1970/2005) philosophy. She did not disclose this to me at the time this conversation was recorded; but her responses during our conversation prompted me to ask the following question. It is obvious from her discourse that critical thinking is an important attribute which marginalized groups should acquire if they wish to achieve success in education landscapes.

> *J: So will you say that your kids are critical thinkers as you were when you were going to school?*
>
> *Ursula: I think so even more than I am, sometimes I think I have created a monster because I do get challenged a lot and it is something I encourage in my kids and when you are working and you are doing everything, it is a little hard to take, but they know that it is something I expect of them. And that you know you teach them to do it not in a rude way, with empathy.*

Committed Staff

Committed teachers were important in our educational development in the Caribbean, and our dialogues have also indicated that we recognized this contribution in our own children's experiences. In our discussions, Pamela raised the concern about students who were challenged with disabilities, not beung accorded fair treatment. It must be pointed out that "research on disability has a very recent history in the English speaking Caribbean" (O'Toole, 2002, p. 63). But, since the 1970s, regular conferences have focused on these issues, advocating for the need for a more inclusive society for children with disabilities (O'Toole, 2002).

In the context of Canadian society, we are encouraged to celebrate our diversity. King (2004) writes that in education, the words "'celebrating diversity,' imply the democratic ethic that all students, regardless of their sociocultural backgrounds, should be educated equitably" (p. 72). Earlier in the literature review, I mentioned that culturally relevant teaching was missing from the school experiences of Caribbean Canadian youth (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Naturally, if this is missing from knowledge construction in the classroom, children of Caribbean heritage are decidedly disadvantaged from their mainstream counterparts. "Culturally relevant teaching rejects the teacher-proof curriculum and conceives of knowledge in a broad sense" (Ladson-Billing, 1998, p. 81). In terms of staff commitment, Ursula spoke of teachers who were very receptive to parental input into the curriculum. These teachers allowed Caribbean and African perspectives to be introduced into the classroom. Parents were thus encouraged to expand the knowledge base of the teachers and their children and were part of the knowledge construction that took place in the classroom. These schools "allow parental input" (Ursula, personal communication, July 16, 2004). She elaborated on this statement during our focus group discussion:

> *Ursula: But with the charter schools there is a lot of parental input in terms of the curriculum, there is a lot, a lot of flexibility. So even in terms of history and those things, you could influence.*
>
> . . .
>
> *And I just happened to know about it from talking to other parents. And it's what I know for myself even in terms of the history, the teachers at Tranquility are quite*

> *happy with this arrangement. You may run into a book that offers a different perspective, they will be more than happy to read that book, to bring that book to the classroom*
>
> *Pamela: That's wonderful.*
>
> *Ursula: That is great.*
>
> *Pamela: I mean once that could be established, then we can have that advantage.*
>
> (Ursula and Pamela, focus group conversation, October 16, 2004)

Ursula also shared with the group the extras teachers put into their teaching practices. These included staying in after school to clarify any questions students may have regarding their assignments. These were practices with which we were familiar in our Caribbean school experiences.

> *Actually at Tranquility, every day every teacher stays for an hour after school with every kid who has questions on their work for that day, every day.*
>
> (Ursula, focus group conversation, October 16, 2004)

Discipline, Discipline, Discipline

All parents stated that discipline was a key factor in education. And by this they did not mean the form of corporal punishment which was part of our educational culture in the Caribbean. Alice gave her impression of the excessive disciplinary acts that were part of our schooling

> *The other one that did not come up because we did talk more about the positive things [in our schooling] was the forms of discipline*

> *And I think that in some cases we did discipline too harshly,*
>
> *You had physical spanking, beating up to some points*
>
> *Yes even up to the lower forms in post secondary and third form*
>
> *But beyond that sometimes with children who did not perform well*
>
> *There was a lot of ridicule which I think did not enhance your self-esteem*
>
> *So if you did well, you get positive reinforcement*
>
> *And if from an early stage you had a learning disability or something that wasn't recognized*
>
> *Then because it was such a fish bowl, such a small area*
>
> *Then you could be labelled, ridiculed and really have poor self-esteem*
>
> *And so those are some of the negative things that could occur*
>
> *Well I do, I mean, I am sure it probably does occur here too*
>
> *But there are less physical forms of punishment here*
>
> *I think probably what children from our culture would suffer more from is indifference. And I think yet we were looking at forms of encouragement, but I think in the Caribbean that's one of the things from our culture that we could have improved on*
>
> (Alice, personal communication, June 29, 2004)

It is obvious from the following statement that although Alice did not condone the level of discipline that was practiced in Caribbean schools, she also did not support what she felt was the relaxed attitude some teachers in Edmonton schools have in disciplining students.

I think that was another move on our part

A conscious decision to do that

Choosing to go to a catholic school

Whether it is right or not,

But that's what we felt

Because from home, I knew that the catholic system tended to be very

[disciplined]

They had good discipline

And they had good standards,

[J: You know I am going to ask you to elaborate. You dislike the discipline in Trinidad as it is negative, but now you mention it as something you wanted for your children]

Oh yes, yes, yes. I do agree that discipline is important. And let me hasten to say yes, discipline is important, but what I wanted to point out was that we did have extremes and we have to acknowledge that I mean. It is not to say that we had a perfect system and that it is way better than it is here. There are things that were there that were positive, that we like to see here. But some of the forms of discipline and some of the extremes of discipline that was used there, I think that it could be tempered by some of the better aspects of discipline that are used here. The ability instead of the use of put downs and ridicule to use like encouragement and positive reinforcement, and to recognize disabilities and not to limit children because they have a disability, is some of the things I like about the system here.

(Alice, personal communication, June 29, 2004)

They all wished that children would have the respect for their elders that was common in our youth.

Having respect for your teacher but it is [not done here]
Having gone to school here
I realize that it is different from the Caribbean school culture
In that going to school [in the Caribbean] I would call my teacher Sir, or Miss,
Here you call a teacher by their name
And some of them even demand that.
I'd call teachers sir and they say my name is not sir
My name is such and such
We grew up to think that it was respectful to say Sir, or Miss, or Mrs., Mrs. Walrond, Sir
Could I have permission to leave the class to go to the washroom
Or something like that
Here you do not have to do that
You do not have to be accountable for your behaviour, unless it is in the extreme.

(Lance, personal communication, August 1, 2004)

Other parents felt it was important to have students wear uniforms as these contributed to positive student behaviour to and from school. They also felt that student uniforms contributed to the building of positive school spirit and school culture. School uniforms also allowed the community to participate with the school in monitoring the community's children. One parent felt students' uniforms reduced commercialism.

> *You had a uniform you wore to school*
>
> *This in itself kept you disciplined*
>
> *Anybody could identify the three or four schools in the area*
>
> *And you could be identified by your uniform*
>
> *You had to go to school in that uniform and it was a form of discipline*
>
> *You do not have that here*
>
> (Lance, personal communication, August 1, 2004)

> *I think it would address discipline*
>
> *And even up the balance between the commercialism and market driven forces*
>
> *that all children*
>
> *Blacks and Whites, have to contend with*
>
> *Whether or not they admit it or not*
>
> (Frank, personal communication, June 17, 2004)

In the following dialogue, Ursula points out that while she supports her children she is fair in disciplining them when their actions are not conducive to school success. However, schooling requires a practice of parental vigilance. Often, she has to step in when a new teacher is trying to seize the opportunity to racialize them. Obviously this teacher is not aware of either her children's schooling habits or her commitment to her children's school success. In another instance Ursula supported the teacher's decision to penalize her daughter for not having her homework completed. Ursula demonstrated that teachers and Caribbean Canadian heritage parents can work together to help their children adhere to the class rules and to self-actualize.

> *You know*
>
> *With my kids, I let them know that they are not perfect*
>
> *Their teachers are not perfect,*
>
> *You know*
>
> *But I am in their corner*
>
> *And we will work it out,*
>
> *And on occasion I have had to,*
>
> *Even at Tranquility, which I think is exceptional,*
>
> *I have had,*
>
> *I remember Anita*
>
> *One of the teachers she was new*
>
> *And maybe not familiar with the school culture there*
>
> *Anita forgot her homework at home.*
>
> *I know she had done it,*
>
> *It was sitting on the table,*
>
> *But she left in a hurry,*
>
> *Called me crying,*
>
> *They were going to dock her 50%*
>
> *'Cause the teacher thought she was lying*
>
> *So I called the teacher*

And said well you know what

We can bring that [assignment] after my work.

I can bring it to the school if you are willing to wait.

She said she couldn't

You know

She said she knows some parents cover for their kids

And what ever

You don't know me and I don't know you

Who gives you a right to be making any assumptions about me

And I don't appreciate it

I am telling you my daughter did her homework,

She worked very hard on it

And you can sit in the school

And wait for it if you want it that badly

You are not willing to so

But 50% to me is punitive and I am not agreeing to that

And she said this is the rule

So I called the principal

And I sent him an e-mail

And I told him that was not acceptable

I know my child has done her work

And so she called back and apologized

And said she will take 15% off

And I said well, that is more acceptable

Because sure, she should have been more responsible, she should have paid attention and brought her stuff to school,

But forget it

Not this 50%.

Man you know how much homework she has worked on

The same way there was another occasion

Anita had not handed in all her stuff

They had to go for a field trip

She was not allowed to go on the field trip

She called me crying

"Can you talk to the teacher?"

I said no

He is going to make sure you get that work done

But you are not going on that field trip because you have a responsibility

And you did not live up to that responsibility

So sure, I will be batting in your corner but you are going to have to live up to your part of the deal too

And my kids know that

[Laughter]

I am there for the teacher. I am there for you

[Laughter]

(Ursula, personal communication, July 16, 2004)

I Mean the Black Experience: Significant Findings

The first part of Chapter Seven highlighted what parents felt teachers should know about their efforts to provide positive educational outcomes for their children. The second half will conclude this analysis with a discussion by highlighting the significant findings that emerged in this research.

> *I think that we are at the stage where we as a community need to be doing something. We need to be taking some of the responsibility to educate our children within and outside the school system. That means we should, at this point, be offering assistance within a cultural context to our own community and we should also be seeing to it that some of our values get into the formal education system or the education system at large. This is not a new thing. It is there for other groups. And, sad to say, the dividing line seems to be on race. When our children are told about the Ukrainians and the Chinese and other experiences; but as for the Black experience there is nothing. And I mean the* ***Black experience****.* ***Not just a Canadian Oiler player*** *[who happens to be Black] or something like that. I mean even as a race of people of African heritage. What are their experiences, and how is it tied to our everyday living here? This needs to be done. It is in a way past due.*

(Frank, personal communication, June 17, 2004

This quote from the discussion I had with Frank, a research participant, leads me to the discussion section of my dissertation. In prior chapters I documented a journey that had brought me to this point. In this section, I will provide an overview of the significant findings. Next, I will consider the relationship these findings have to the existing research studies, and this will be followed by the implications my research has for current theories on culture and education. Any findings that do not support my present understandings will then be highlighted at this time. I will also deal with the limitations of this research. Finally, I will provide the recommendations for future research studies and the implications that the findings of this research may have for Edmonton's education system.

Overview, Considerations and Implications

Culture and Cultural Identity

The theoretical underpinnings that ground this research are based on Ogbu's (1992b) thesis establishing a connection between a minority group's cultural frame of reference and this group's responses to education. This model has allowed me to explore the educational culture of some individuals of Caribbean Canadian heritage and to make general assumptions of this group's perception of education within a Caribbean historical context and in the present Edmonton landscape.

My initial findings isolated cultural identity as a major construct requiring particular attention. Discovering the relationship between cultural identity and culture as it pertains to people who live in a multicultural setting, I developed a cultural identity model that speaks to the identity of people of Caribbean heritage. The model shows seven realms; namely, the individual, his or her most immediate influencing agents such as clothing, the family and the home. The community is the next influencing sector, followed by the societal structure and the world structure. The sixth realm (Nn) is undefined but refers to those entities that are presently unknown. With this model, I was able to understand and hence interpret the Caribbean education culture of the individuals who participated in my research. This model will require further fine tuning in terms of some of the constructs used in its sectors. However, it is a suitable model to view cultural identity in multicultural settings such as Canada and its school systems. Further, this research also points out the futility in assuming that individuals can be totally de-cultured.

The fact that all the participants of this research have a history that includes enslavement and are products of a (re)cultivating experiment, is worthy of important consideration. My cultural identity model suggests the individual interacts with the culture that exists within structures, but he or she still exercises agency with respect to the level of this culture, that he or she is willing to inculcate as part of his or her identity. This is an important argument that must be put forth in any discussion schools undertake when they develop policies for educational institutions which uphold the tenets of Canada's multicultural policy. I argue that in a global context consisting of imaginary landscapes (Appadurai, 2003), heritage identity is sustained and has a stronger influence on cultural hybrid identity formation in a multicultural society. Its impact on schooling must be studied further. The concept of border crossing (Giroux, 2005) will be even more significant for immigrants in today's school system. Assimilation may occur over time, but I feel it will be much slower than in the past. As well, this assimilation will be to a complex milieu or métisage of cultures, similar to that which exists in the Caribbean today. However as my research suggests, today's school systems are encouraged to develop "border pedagogy" to deal with the present phenomenon (Giroux, 2005, p. 20).

Caribbean Schooling and the Formation of Cultural Identity

The cultural identity of people of Caribbean heritage is constructed on the basis of the education structures in the Caribbean and the ways in which individuals interact with these structures. Throughout our discussions I found concepts such as social class, gender, and financial capital were determinants of the abilities of the research participants and me to access education. However, not withstanding those constraints, our teachers usually interceded to ensure that we were educated. They did so by maintaining close contact with our parents and the community and, in many cases, acting as mediators to interpret the system to our parents. In some cases teachers provided extra reading material or food to some students. As well, many of us spoke about food programs which were organized in the community by women under the auspices of the Coterie of Social Workers (Reddock, 1994). This tri-partite connection between school, community, and family was a common construct in the Caribbean education landscape.

As attempts at stripping Caribbean people of their African culture were not totally successful, the English we speak is "English-based creoles of the Caribbean" (Rickford, 1999, p. 141). On realizing that its cadence contributed to the voice of my research participants, I note that the Creole languages are important aspects of our cultural identity. This notation has implications for the teaching of Canada's official languages in today's classrooms, as these classrooms have and will continue to have a distinct percentage of immigrants who will bring their own forms of Creole English to their construction of hybrid Canadian identities. Will we be put into a position of having to appreciate and recognize the various forms of Canadian English in the future?

Caribbean Informal Pedagogy

My research participants showed that their education in the Caribbean was clearly informed by both formal and informal pedagogies. In most cases the informal education critiqued the formal education. The calypsos deconstructed the nursery rhymes that were taught in school, while the political speeches critiqued the educational structures and the hegemonic information used to colonize people in the margins. The counter hegemonic discourse was contextually temporal and reflected the regional concerns of the countries. For example, the speeches that would have influenced my research participants during the 1950s and 1960s addressed the fact that most of the Caribbean was still being ruled by colonial governments in Europe. Williams' speech demonstrated his historical knowledge of the oppression suffered under British colonialism. The rhetoric was clearly meant to educate and to address the region's desire to be independent of Britain. The tone of Bishop's speeches in 1980 reflects another period in Caribbean history. Here, Bishop, who was Prime Minister of Grenada when he made the speech, provided his listeners with an accurate account of the financial state of his country. In recognizing that education was important and that the government could not fund a program to eradicate illiteracy, he called on the people to volunteer their service as a patriotic duty. This speech, though worthy of deconstruction as an exercise to determine the education philosophy of Caribbean people, demonstrates revolutionary rhetoric.

The historical events that ushered Maurice Bishop into the role of Prime Minister were described by both my research participants and literature as being very tumultuous. Many citizens, including Bishop, were eventually killed. Both periods encouraged the citizens to embrace freedom from colonialism. However, in the first instance, independence was achieved with minimal bloodshed while during the later instance we witnessed a revolution. These incidents also reflected the way my research participants engaged education. Both groups recognized that our education under colonialism was not intended for emancipation. In fact, the research participants discussed the fact that clearly education was meant to benefit the masters of colonialism. However, the participants who were influenced by Williams' speeches and pedagogy were more apt to approach education as if it were a political tool with which one can dismantle the master's colonial structures.

Freire's pedagogical philosophy contributed to the pedagogical discourse in Grenada during Ursula's schooling. Although she did not mention this at any of our conversations for the research, she did so subsequently. My literature search supported her statement. Judging from the chaos that ensued in Grenada as a result of the call for political change, I cautioned about the ethics involved in conscientização. As Freire

(2005) postulates: Does "the conscientização of men and women to a specific situation of injustice . . . lead them to 'destructive fanaticism' or to a 'sensation of total collapse of their world'" (p. 35)? As cultural workers and educators, those who conduct research and create awareness of the problems that communities face must be cognisant of the responsibilities inherent in such tasks. It appears that Williams as a community worker understood this role (Palmer, 2006). As I continue to work in my role as community worker, it is important that I understand my community and emulate those who were able to structure changes with minimal collateral damage.

Racism in the Schools

Racism continues to exist in our schools as the research literature has well established. This continues to affect the self-actualization potential of our children. The dialogues suggest that administrators are not prepared to admit the existence of racism or that it is a social issue which is unsolvable at the school level. One of our research participants said he experienced a teacher who blamed a Black student for misbehaving when he personally observed the blame rested with a White student. In this case negative hallowing is at play. Parents, who are unable to cope with the racism, remove their children from the situation because once again they fear their children will be in a double jeopardy situation. One parent elected to shop around for a school which met her criteria. In this regard she questioned the administrators as to their protocol for dealing with racism at their school. This particular parent had a cultural identity which recognised the political nature of education.

Schooling was particularly difficult for Caribbean Canadian male adolescents and all of them used sports to navigate and negotiate their school and community lives, thus supporting James' (2005) research on Black youth, sports, and school. One youth played baseball as an extra-curricula activity and was able to get a scholarship to a post-secondary institution. Male youths were singled out as jocks and studs at a very early age and one in particular lived with this "stigma" throughout his junior high schooling, and as a result refused to participate in sports. Given the freedom to choose, he did participate in sports during his high school years. Of the African Caribbean boys that Sewell (2004) questioned for his research, 41% of boys were conformist, did not rebel against school, and "accepted its means and goals" (p. 104). Of the remaining, 35% "accepted the goals of schooling, but rejected the means" (p. 107), and 6 % were "retreatist," rejecting "both the goals and means of schooling but for whom these are not replaced by the subculture" (p. 109). In my sample of three male youths, one of them belonged to each of these groups. This evidence supports the existing research and highlights the need to address these issues both in the Caribbean Canadian community and in the school system. Female Caribbean Canadians fared relatively better than their male counterparts, but in most cases activities which they excelled in were extra-curricular to their schooling. These findings point to a lack of participation in the school culture. This lack of participation is markedly different to the experiences of their parents in the Caribbean school system. What is also troubling is the fact that the male participants in my research all spoke about the impact adventure and out-door orienteering activities had on their socialization to adulthood, yet these activities were seldom part of their boys' experiences. Only one boy participated in outdoor wilderness activity and this was the one who attended a charter school. Research in this respect is needed in the Caribbean Canadian community to determine if this is a contributing factor to the lack of socialization of our youth to adulthood. As well, educators need to look at these aspects of cultural identity when they plan curricula for male youths.

Non-supportive Findings and Limits to This Research

In terms of Obbu's (1992b) analysis, these attributes of culture and cultural identity, more specifically, must ground his analysis. Many of the parents I conversed with felt their children had successfully navigated the school system. This supports Ogbu's (1992b) theory. However, the level of success of the children of Caribbean Canadian heritage in Edmonton's school system was also attributable to the individual cultural identity of their parents. This research did not include students who had dropped out of school. Although some graduated high-school with insufficient credits or with low scores they, on average, went back to school to upgrade their marks. As this research did not contain those parents of students who had not graduated, Ogbu's (1992) theory was not tested absolutely or exclusively. The Caribbean area has people of many ethnic identities. My research is also limited in this respect as I only interviewed families of predominantly Black Caribbean heritage. A more comprehensive research would have included people of South-Asian, Chinese, and European heritages. Efforts were made to satisfy this criterion, but I was unsuccessful.

Recommendations for Further Research

In the discussion section I suggested areas for further research which are needed for other ethnic groups in the Caribbean. Action research is needed in the Caribbean Canadian community to develop community capacity. My research suggested that students were not active in the school culture. Is this lack of participation reflective of Caribbean Canadian families who see themselves as marginalized, politically, socially, and financially in the Canadian society? Are students emulating their parents? Research is required in the school system to determine to what extent overtures have been made to include non-traditional communities in the Edmonton education landscape. Research is needed to question why there are not more Caribbean Canadian people participating in education at the teaching and administrative levels.

Implications of the Study for Professional Practice

The parents of this research study have provided this information with the hope that their wishes will be communicated to teachers and administrators in Edmonton's school system. The group is now aware that parents can and should participate in the politics of education. Although this research was conducted within the Caribbean Canadian community in Edmonton, these findings can be applied to similar immigrant communities. Caribbean Canadian parents who are English speaking felt left out of the education process. This was dissimilar from their Caribbean education experience. Educators must be made aware of the need for constructing this school-community-family network. It is especially crucial now when many immigrant families are non-

English or non-French speaking. Schools also have a major role to play in community integration and should take the initiative to see that appropriate policies are in place to facilitate this objective.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Familiar Landscapes, Research Insights: A Letter from a Community Cultural Worker to Teachers and School Administrators

The aim of my dissertation was to understand the educational experiences of Caribbean heritage parents both in the Caribbean where many of them attended schooling and in Edmonton where they now educate their children. The thesis was not an attempt to analyse school/teaching practices based on parents' reports. However, having elucidated their opinions, the hope was that the findings will provide administrators, teachers, the Caribbean Canadian community, and their children with an understanding of their values as these pertained to education and development.

Caribbean parents have an educational philosophy which was always there but suppressed during slavery. These parents passed on their memories of African music, religiosity, and other indigenous knowledge through informal education practices. Young enslaved Africans were taught semi-formally to age four or five by older women only that which was necessary to become productive workers on the plantations. As they grew older, they learned more about plantation workers as they worked along with parents or elders on the plantation. The restriction of education was significant to the enslaved experience and, as a matter of fact, the enslaved was made illiterate of many of their own lexica. Freire (2005) writes:

> One of the violences perpetrated by illiteracy is the suffocation of the consciousness and the expressiveness of men and women from reading and

> writing, thus limiting their capacity to write about their reading of the world so they can rethink about their original reading of it. (p. 2)

The significance of Freire's statement cannot be under stated as it underscores one of the most vexing contentions of the African Caribbean experience. We understand what it means to be denied linguistic expressive forms and the participants of my research have demonstrated in this dissertation that we do not wish to have this grievous offence perpetrated on any of our children again. Illiteracy or the lack of understanding of the morphology of language is detrimental to the individual psyche (Fanon, 1952/1967). Further to this understanding Freire writes:

> Illiteracy is a handicap to the extent that in literate cultures it interdicts the illiterates by preventing them from completing the cycle in the relationship between language, thought, and reality and by closing the doors to writing, which represents an important and necessary means of understanding that relationship. (p. 3)

And he reminds educators and cultural workers that:

> We must remember that there is a dynamic movement between thought, language, and reality that, if well understood, results in a greater creative capacity. The more we experience the dynamics of such movement, the more we become critical subjects concerning the process of knowledge, teaching, learning, reading, writing, and studying. (p. 3)

With emancipation and freedom came the desire for and drive towards formal education as this was deemed to be one avenue away from the shackles of the slave owner and the drudgery of plantation work. In most cases the reality of freed Caribbean people's poverty made this desire a daunting want. Again, this cultural experience has allowed the families in this research to appreciate and value education. Many times however, in this research, our appreciation for education was not perceived by educators and this too, was a contentious issue which we had to resolve.

Clearly, it can be seen that families in the Caribbean value education and credentials. Alfred's (2003) and Waters' (1999) research findings among Caribbean immigrants led to similar conclusions. Black Caribbean families view education as primary, a job as second, with perhaps social status rating and financial success next in an individual drive towards self-actualization. An interesting question that can be asked is: How does this group define success? Having answered this question then there is a need to articulate this information to educators in the Canadian school system. Also worthy of inquiry is the following: Do Caribbean immigrants face any challenges when they attempt to convey messages about their educational philosophy to Canadian educators? Do Caribbean immigrant families lack agency within the school system or for that matter within society? As Mitchell (2001, 2004) writes, groups with financial capital in a global economy that is driven by a neo-liberal agenda can influence the choices they seek. This is a faint solution for other ethno-cultural minority groups that lack this financial leverage, but still see their cultural model as being equally important. In my research, one parent believes that "knowledge of being assertive" (Rosemary, personal communication, 2004) should start at the home. If this is the case, then changes in parents' attitudes may occur with education. This approach slows systemic change by placing the nexus for change on individual *parental-teacher* action. It also does little to help the children who are now in the system. Finally, how do educators harness the cultural model which Caribbean youth and other transnationals bring to the education arena, to educate them "for democracy in a non-nationalist framework" (Mitchell, 2001, p. 78)?

As we have seen in the Caribbean, education is a community affair in which the teacher's role is central to the education system which consists of the child-community-parent model. Teachers in that context usually advocated for the student and had full authority to discipline as well. This regime of punishment was usually administered to those who did not tow the line. It was only if the discipline was deemed to be excessive by the parents that they would intervene. My father, with significant social capital as he was well-educated and on a similar social status as the headmaster and senior teachers, was confident enough to go to school and handle any education matters assertively with them. This was very infrequent as he left most school matters to the school teachers. This was not always the case for some of my research participants.

Community involvement was in terms of ensuring that students were well nourished and that their spiritual needs were also being met. The breakfast shed food program was free to all students wherever this was available. In Trinidad and Tobago for example, the Coterie of Social workers administered this food service. In Grenada where such programs were not available, teachers would supply food to those who came to school without a meal. I mentioned my own experience with my aunt's breakfast shed in Curepe, Trinidad. Her school involvement was also in the area of cultural education. I also remember her getting together with Mrs. McLean and others in the community to organize the children's carnival events. My research participants also referred to these events as being part of their schooling. In addition, some of them mentioned that ministers from the church visited their homes whenever they failed to show up at church for Sunday school. Educators and school administrators must understand these long-standing relationships that are part of Caribbean school culture and seek some ways in Edmonton's landscape to make this possible. These outreach programs would work towards forming community-teacher-school relationships and would endear schools to parents and Edmonton's Caribbean community.

Public pedagogy, in the form of popular Calypso, contributed greatly to providing education of people in the Caribbean. This alternative form of pedagogy helped to provide another perspective to the education that students received. The calypsos provided a critical perspective to what the students were learning in their formal education classes and its delivery in the local language of the country ensured that its message penetrated their psyches.

Education, political awareness, and social development were three pillars of development in the colonial Caribbean. Community involvement was also to prepare students and young adults for active participation in national citizenship and the development of the Caribbean after colonialism. Informal education was taken quite seriously. In my dissertation, I tried to unpack the political discourse that the research participants referenced. This discourse occurred during two eras in the social, cultural, and political development of countries in the Caribbean. The research participants drew on St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, and Grenada to illustrate the use of public pedagogy.

In Trinidad, public pedagogy was available to male youths through youth camps that were part of the political platform for the People National Movement political party. Male youths learned leadership skills and functionary skills at these camps. All the male participants cited the outdoor experiences as being vital in helping them with male bonding and in growing into adulthood. In the case of the females, this growth was experienced through service opportunities. This is an important point in my own research. As I noted, when problems with male African-Caribbean heritage male youths were discussed (James, 2005; Sewell, 2004), there was seldom any mention of the fact that another avenue for public pedagogy was the town square which political parties used to full advantage. The discussions demonstrated that political leaders who were able to arouse the interest of the crowd were able to affect transformative learning. Freire (1993/2005) states:

> The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. In both stages, it is always through action in depth that the culture of domination is culturally confronted. In the first stage this confrontation occurs through the change in the way the oppressed perceive the

> world of oppression; in the second stage, through the expulsion of the myths created and developed in the old order, which like specters haunt the new structure emerging from the revolutionary transformation. (pp. 72–73)

Public pedagogy in the forms of calypsos and the speeches in Woodford Square were used to affirm cultural, social, and political dignity in the people. Opportunities such as these, with the intent to encourage self-affirmation and emancipation, can help Canadian heritage youth understand and articulate national citizenship in a multicultural country such as Canada. Are Caribbean heritage youth politically active? Do they aspire to be politically active? Are opportunities available in school for them to be involved in these types of activities? Research is necessary in the areas of school politics to determine the participation levels of Caribbean heritage youth in political organizations, whether these are in schools or in extra-curricular activities.

The experience in Grenada supported more revolutionary zealousness in the education arena. However, what this did for Ursula was to educate her as a critical thinker. Critical consciousness as a pedagogy for student learning functions as Freire (1970/2005) espouses:

> Students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obligated to respond to that challenge. Because they apprehend the challenge as interrelated to other problems within a total context, not as a theoretical question, the resulting comprehension tends to be increasingly critical and thus constantly less alienated. Their response to the challenge evokes new challenges, followed by new

> understandings; and gradually the students come to regard themselves as committed. (p. 81)

African-Caribbean male youth have a long history of working in groups and in participating in outdoor adventure type activities. As one male research participant indicated, incorporating these types of activities into the educational experiences of African-Caribbean male youth may help in their development. There is no doubt that African-Canadian male youth enjoy participating in sports. This competitive nature can be harnessed and channeled into the other disciplines in the school curriculum. One male research participant spoke about the way he and his friends worked through their school assignments by studying together and competing in their exams to determine who scored better in a fair exam. Encouraging the youth to work together in study groups will be an excellent way to foster this friendly competitive urge.

Errol shared this information about one of his favourite teachers who taught him at school and at Sunday school.

> *Errol: I seemed to have had a few favourites. I recall one of my earliest was a Sunday school teacher who was also at the school. So yes, I remember her name well. It was Beverly.*
>
> *[J: What was so special about her?]*
>
> *Errol: I think because she got you over that hump in realizing the value of methodical (methodology), application, discipline, and getting things done. So it wasn't so much that I recall her for you know "the light went on above or how to*

> *do this or that." But she got us into a mode of thinking; that, turn up on time, be prepared and those kinds of things. She showed us the value of those things.*
>
> (Errol, personal communicaton, June 16, 2004)

As he noted, Teacher Beverly's pedagogy or how she taught him was more important than the content of the exercise. Unpacking the discourse of the males in my survey, we see emerging the pedagogical idea that how African-Caribbean heritage boys are taught and their environment for study are as important as what they are taught.

"Preparation for manhood" was another theme that came through in my discussions with my research participants. They mentioned that an environment of constructive discipline was important. Time spent in the company of an adult figure as they explored the world outside the classroom was also an important way of learning about the world. Sporting activities were seen as a discipline and not as a means of earning a living; it was something that was done to help young boys through to being an adult. Sports allowed youth to be in the company of older adults where they learned to socialize together. Caribbean male youth get together to lime/hang out or to participate in informal talking circles where they discuss everything from sports, politics, current events, education to popular culture. Our female youth stayed close to home where they learnt informally from their mothers.

The genealogy of cultural identity is a theme which emerged in my research. I gathered from the research participants' dialogue that while culture was perceived as dynamic, their cultural identity was derived through the ways they interacted with various structures. Stereotyping is a phenomenon which still needs to be eradicated if people of

Caribbean heritage are to self-actualize. I believe that the education system needs to understand the role it plays in perpetuating racial and ethnic stereotyping. Pre-service teachers also need to be open to learning more about the multicultural nature of Canada if they wish to interrupt the stereotyping discourse that still prevails in Edmonton's school system.

Finally, Edmonton is a multicultural community that exists in a world where the juxtaposing of different cultures is being vested with normative status and assumptions. However although these realities exists, families and communities are not being prepared for the ramifications of a normatively defined multicultural society. Educators in this landscape must therefore see themselves as multicultural workers. Freire's (1970/2005) focus on teachers as cultural workers has to be updated and expanded to include the notion of the genuine multicultural community. Teachers have to recognize their responsibility for moulding individuals who will live and work in multicultural communities. With reference to Freire's view of teachers as cultural workers, McLaren (2003a) writes:

> Freire sees the role of teachers not as coddling parents and aunts. Teachers do not live in a pristine world devoid of ideology, of racism, of social classes, but rather they live as social and political agents who 'challenge their students, from an early to a more adult age, through games, stories, and reading so that students understand the need to create coherence between discourse and practice. (p. xxxvi)

I believe the present curriculum and pedagogy are insufficient because these do not prepare students for living and working side by side with people of different cultural heritages. This practice still leaves those from the dominant society with an understanding that they are still superior, but now with a little more knowledge of and concern for the "other." Our school teaching does not transmit to students the significance embodied in the notion that in a multicultural community where, ideally, each individual has the right and potential for self-actualization that they will eventually see these self-actualized individuals in all strata of society. It does not prepare students to deal with the consequences of the self-actualization of the *other*. Given this to be the case, how must these future adults transform their thinking to deal with the self-actualized other? How are students prepared to deal with the notion of the visible minority success figure or authority figure? Presently, teachers are not prepared for this phenomenon and I have not seen evidence where teacher educators provide pre-service teachers with this level of questioning. Kallen (2003) writes that "nowhere is cultural discrimination more evident than in the 'hidden' cultural curriculum of the Canadian educational system" (p. 69). She states that this is manifested "in acts of commission and omission" (p. 69) and bases her evidence on two studies. She writes:

> A study of the educational history of children from five ethnic minorities in British Columbia carried out in the 1970s clearly demonstrated that there was a strong tendency for the teacher, the curriculum, and the environment of the classroom to apotheosize the achievements of the dominant ethnic group and to ignore the equally important contributions to Canadian society made by members

> of ethnic minorities (Ashworth 1979). More than 20 years later, a report on *Racism in Our Schools* released by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation in 2001 reveal that a monocultural curriculum is a continuing barrier to equal educational achievement for visible minority children (CRRF 2001b). (Kallen, 2003, p. 69)

Kallen (2003) goes on to iterate that cultural discrimination, systemic discrimination, and discrimination by omission, permit "barriers to interethnic understanding and interaction to remain solidly entrenched" (p. 69). A failure to understand "the multifaceted concepts of racism" contributes to "the inability of members of humankind to respect the fundamental human rights and freedoms of peoples they consider inherently different from themselves" (p. 70).

These are the landscapes that are familiar to Caribbean parents who raise their children in Edmonton. Those who have participated in this dissertation presented insightful knowledge to this work. As I conclude, during the time I took to prepare my findings I have kept in touch with the participants. I have noticed an awareness and conscientização of the men and women to the situation of education in Edmonton for our community. At the same time, I note that there has been an increase in criminal activity among the male youths in the Caribbean community. How much of this is due to the kind of education they received in Edmonton's schools cannot be addressed in this dissertation. Suffice to say, it is a concern of our community. I conclude with the suggestion that leaders in our community need to actively engage Edmonton's school system to seek answers to the questions raised in this dissertation. In my capacity as an executive member of CCACH, I will disseminate the findings of this dissertation to my community and hopefully this will empower them to act accordingly.

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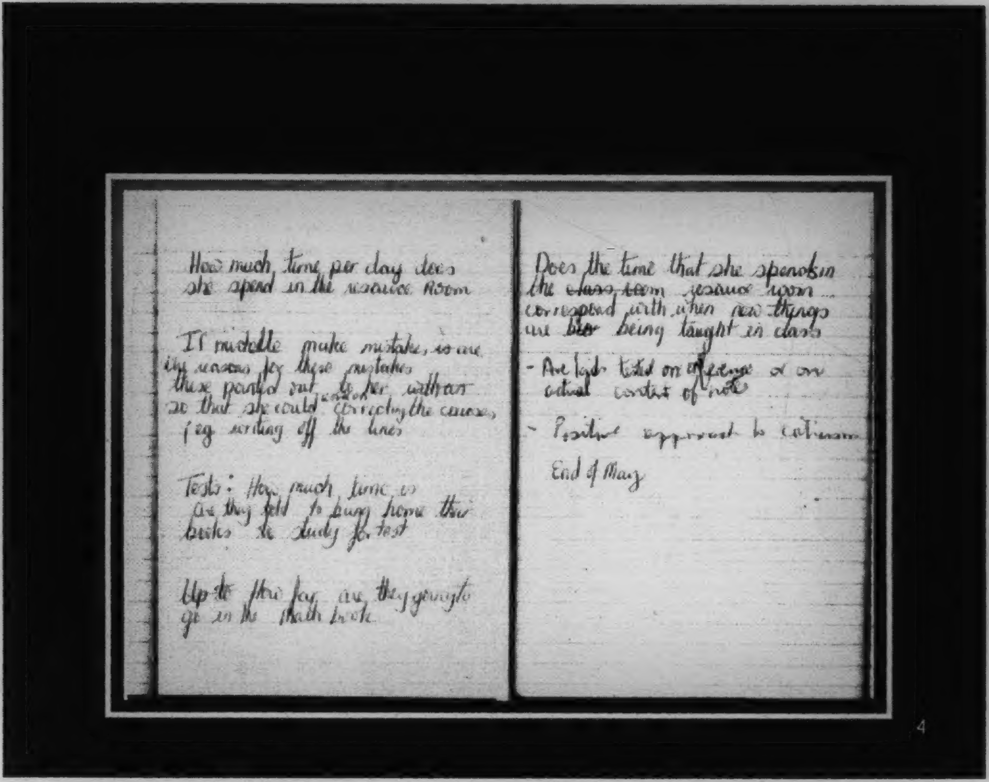
APPENDIX 1



How much time per day does
she spend in the resource Room

If Michelle make mistake, is are
the reasons for these mistakes
these pointed out to her, without
so that she could avoid correcting the causes,
(eg writing off the lines

Tests: How much time is
Are they told to bring home the
books to study for test

Up to how far are they going to
go in the Math book

Does the time that she spends in
the ~~class room~~ resource room
correspond with when new things
are ~~bee~~ being taught in class

- Are tests tested on reference or on actual content of note
- Positive approach to criticism

End of May

APPENDIX 2

PROFILE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

PSEUDONYM	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	YEARS OF SCHOOLING	MARITAL STATIS	NO OF CHILDREN
FRANK	JAMAICA	13 YEARS	MARRIED	2 (G)
ERROL	ST.VINCENT	15YEARS	MARRIED	2 (G)
LANCE	TRINIDAD	12 YEARS	MARRIED	2 (G & B)
MONICA	BARBADOS	12 YEARS	MARRIED	2 (G)
PAMELA	TRINIDAD	15 YEARS	MARRIED	2 (G)
ROSEMARY	TOBAGO	14 YEARS	MARRIED	2 (G & B)
URSULA	GRENADA	14.5 YEARS	DIVORCED	3 (1B & 2G)
ALICE	TRINIDAD	12 YEARS	SINGLE	4 (1B & 3G)

G—GIRL

B—BOY

APPENDIX 3

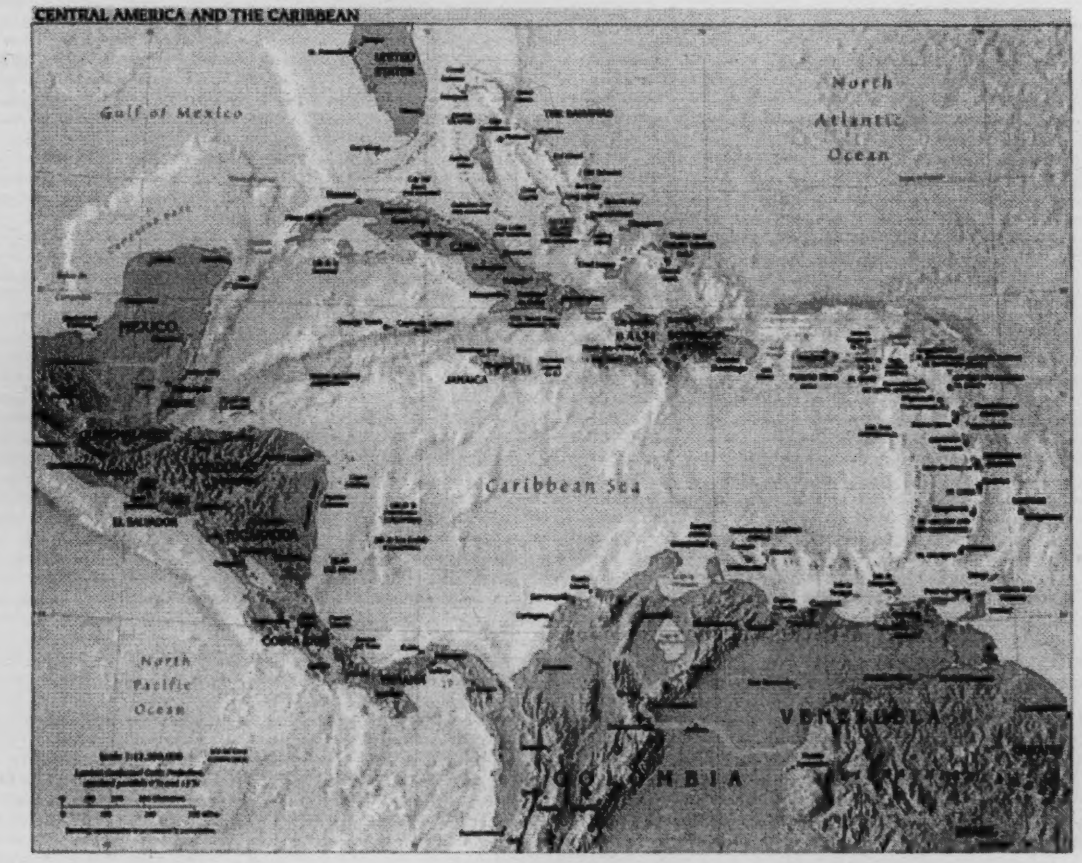

CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
UNITED STATES
THE BAHAMAS
Gulf of Mexico
North Atlantic Ocean
MEXICO
JAMAICA
Caribbean Sea
EL SALVADOR
COSTA RICA
North Pacific Ocean
VENEZUELA
COLOMBIA

Figure 5: Map of Central America and the Caribbean

APPENDIX 4

Table 1

Place of birth for the Caribbean immigrant population by period of immigration, 2006 counts and percentage distribution, for Alberta – 20% sample data

Place of birth	Counts					% distribution				
		Period of immigration					Period of immigration			
	Immigrant population[1]	Before 1991	1991 to 1995	1996 to 2000	2001 to 2006[2]	Immigrant population[1]	Before 1991	1991 to 1995	1996 to 2000	2001 to 2006[2]
						Caribbean Canadian population[5]				
Caribbean[4]	**11785**	**8800**	**1255**	**880**	**825**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Anguilla	15	15	0	0	0	**0.1%**	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Antigua and Barbuda[3]	200	200	0	0	0	**1.7%**	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Bahamas	100	70	20	0	10	**0.9%**	0.8%	1.6%	0.0%	1.2%
Barbados	585	475	40	45	20	**5.0%**	5.4%	3.2%	5.1%	2.4%
Belize	395	190	35	25	155	**3.4%**	2.2%	2.8%	2.8%	18.8%
Bermuda	110	85	0	0	20	**0.9%**	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%
Dominica	50	30	0	0	10	**0.4%**	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
Grenada	285	220	40	10	10	**2.4%**	2.5%	3.2%	1.1%	1.2%
Guyana	2,420	1,875	295	145	105	**20.5%**	21.3%	23.5%	16.5%	12.7%
Jamaica	3,755	2,685	455	385	230	**31.9%**	30.5%	36.3%	43.8%	27.9%
Montserrat	40	35	0	0	10	**0.3%**	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
Saint Kitts and Nevis	95	90	10	0	0	**0.8%**	1.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Saint Lucia	215	150	25	0	30	**1.8%**	1.7%	2.0%	0.0%	3.6%
Saint Vincent and the	260	170	60	25	0	**2.2%**	1.9%	4.9%	2.8%	0%

Grenadines										
Trinidad and Tobago	3,260	2,510	275	245	225	**27.7%**	28.5%	21.9 %	27.8%	27.3 %

Notes:

1. Immigrants are persons who are, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others are more recent arrivals. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number were born in Canada. Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006. (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population., p. 7)
2. "Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006". (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population., p.7)
3. "Formerly known as Antigua".
4. The Caribbean or "West Indies art the islands stretching between Florida at the southern tip of the United States of America and the northern coast of South America" (Alleyne, 1995, p.9). Belize, Central America; Guyana, South America are both English-speaking and generally considered to be part of the West Indies. Bermuda is considered with the Caribbean area in the Canadian census.
5. Caribbean Canadian percentage (%) population distribution refers to the percentage of former residents of the respective areas who constitute the former Caribbean residents who now live in Alberta, Canada.

Table 2

Selected Visible Minority Groups for Population, for Alberta and Edmonton, 2001 Census - 20% Sample Data

	Caribbean & Bermuda		Central & South America	
	Alberta	Edmonton	Alberta	Edmonton
Total Immigrant Population	9010	4000	22300	7835
Total V.M. Population	8030	3675	15880	6505
Chinese	225	90	165	70
South Asian	505	235	690	450
Black	5775	2705	575	335
Filipino	10	10	20	0
Latin American	205	95	13380	5130
South East Asian	0	0	10	10
Arab	30	20	175	105
West Asian	0	0	30	10
Korean	0	0	0	0
Japanese	0	0	10	0
V.M. N.I.E.	1045	470	620	270
Multiple V. M.	220	50	215	115
All Others	975	330	6425	1330

Blacks constitute the largest group of visible minority immigrants migrating from the Caribbean at 72 % of the total visible minority population. These are followed by South Asians (6.2%) and Chinese (2.8%).

APPENDIX 5

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Individual and Couple Questions

1. For the purpose of this interview, please tell me your name and address?
2. Please tell me the number of years of schooling that you have had?
3. Was this all in the Caribbean? If no could you tell me where you received all your other schooling?
4. How do you respond to the following statement: My schooling was an enjoyable experience? Would you say you strongly agree, you somewhat agree, you neither agree nor disagree, you somewhat disagree or you strongly disagree with this statement?
5. Please describe your Caribbean schooling experience?
6. What would you like teachers to know about you education experiences in the Caribbean?
7. Please tell me what you would like teachers to know about your education experiences with your children in Edmonton? **[Repeated at couple meeting]**
8. Tell me about you education experiences with your children in Edmonton. **[Repeated at couple meeting]**
9. What are your hopes for your children future? **[Repeated at couple meeting]**
10. Describe how the formal education your children received has prepared them for the future? **[Repeated at couple meeting]**

Group Interview Questions

1. Reflecting on your object of interest, please describe how it relates to your education experience?
2. How has this influenced what your expectations are for the education of your children? Please explain?
3. Based on what you have said, what would you like teachers to know about how you value education? Please explain?

APPENDIX 6

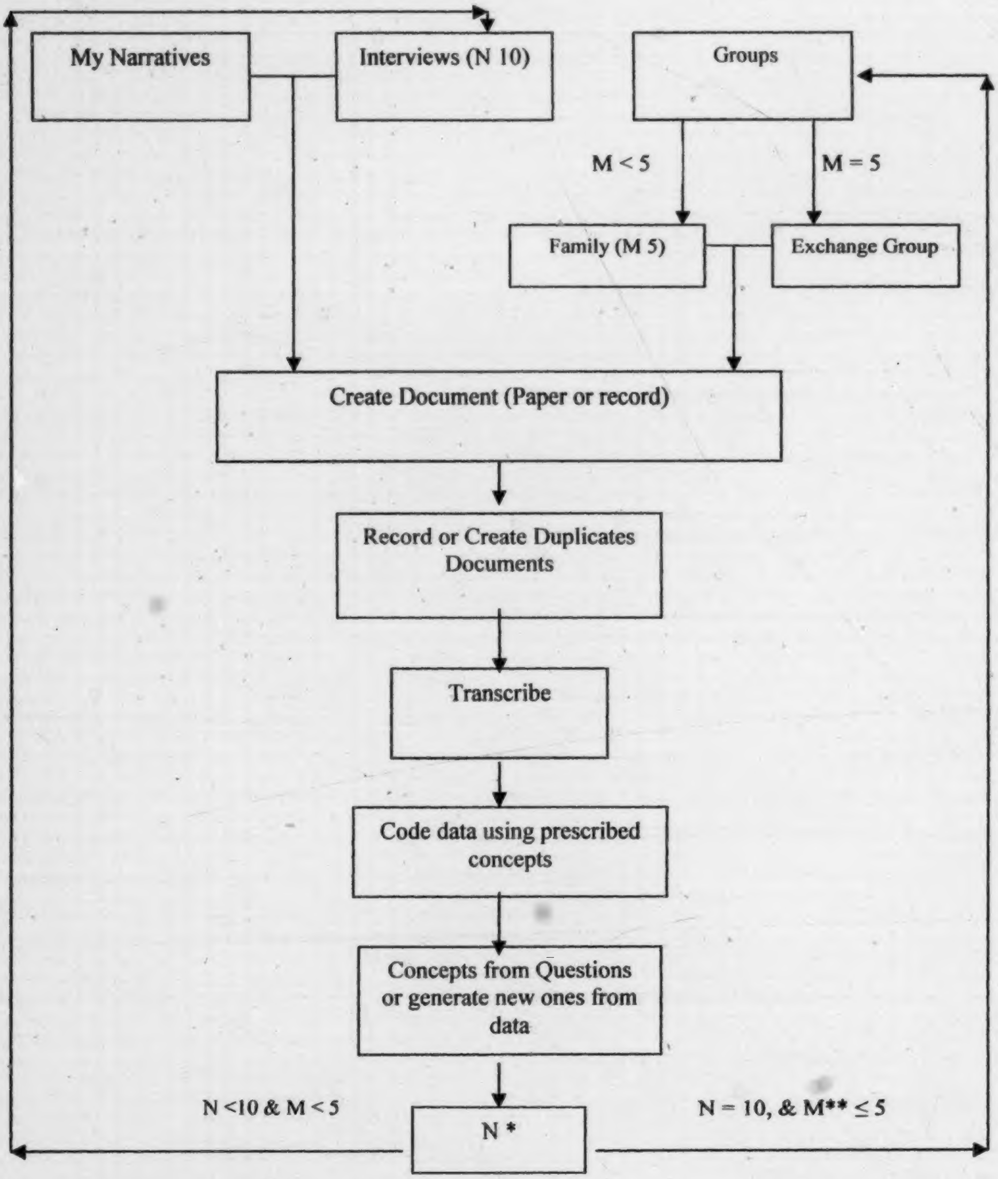

My Narratives
Interviews (N 10)
Groups
M < 5
M = 5
Family (M 5)
Exchange Group
Create Document (Paper or record)
Record or Create Duplicates Documents
Transcribe
Code data using prescribed concepts
Concepts from Questions or generate new ones from data
N <10 & M < 5
N *
N = 10, & M** ≤ 5

Figure 1. Flowchart of Data Collection Process

*N may be less than 10 if the family has only one head of the household. In that case, **

M, the number of couple interviews will be less than 5.

APPENDIX 7

Canada's Multicultural policy stated below thus seeks the following:
(1) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to
(*a*) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;
(*b*) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future;
(*c*) promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation;
(*d*) recognize the existence of communities whose members share a common origin and their historic contribution to Canadian society, and enhance their development;
(*e*) ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity;
(*f*) encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character;
(*g*) promote the understanding and creativity that arise from the interaction between individuals and communities of different origins;
(*h*) foster the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures of Canadian society and promote the reflection and the evolving expressions of those cultures;
(*i*) preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada; and
(*j*) advance multiculturalism throughout Canada in harmony with the national commitment to the official languages of Canada. (Department of Justice, Canada, 1985, sec. 3)